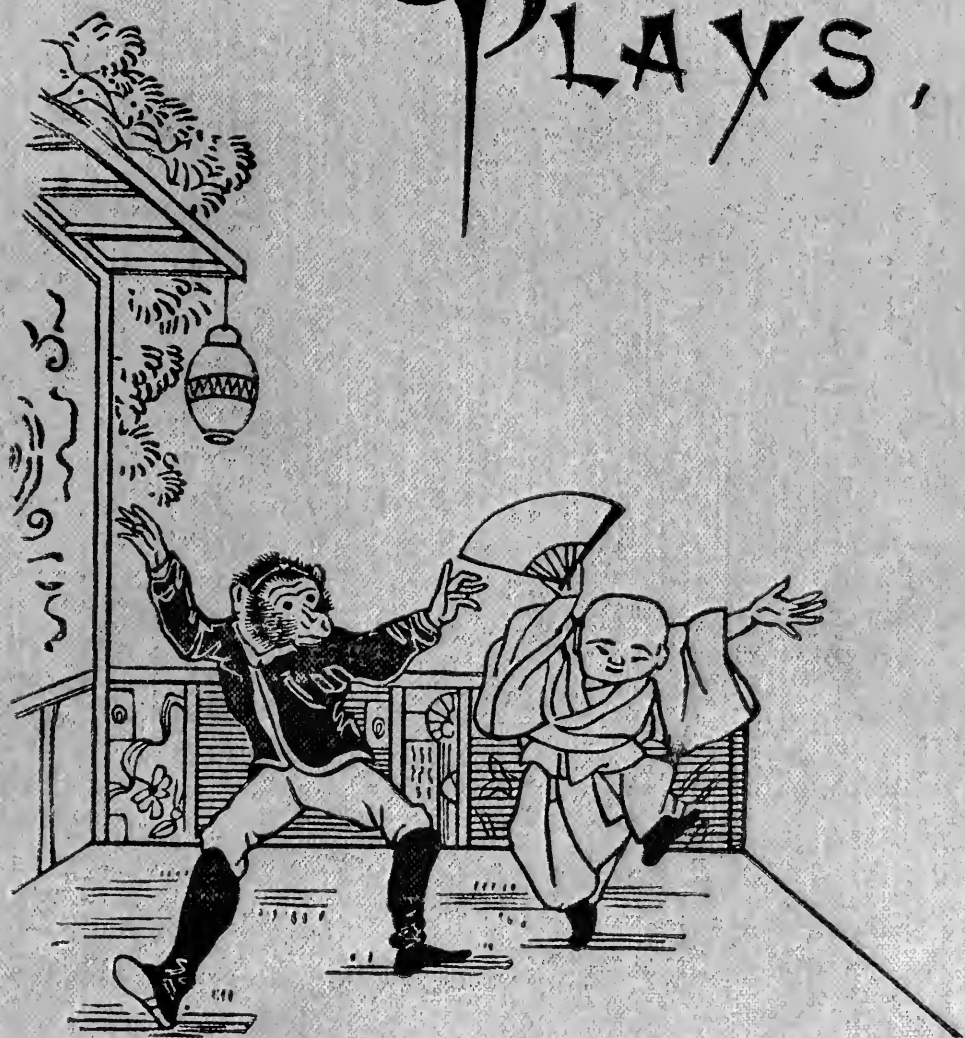


JAPANESE PLAYS,





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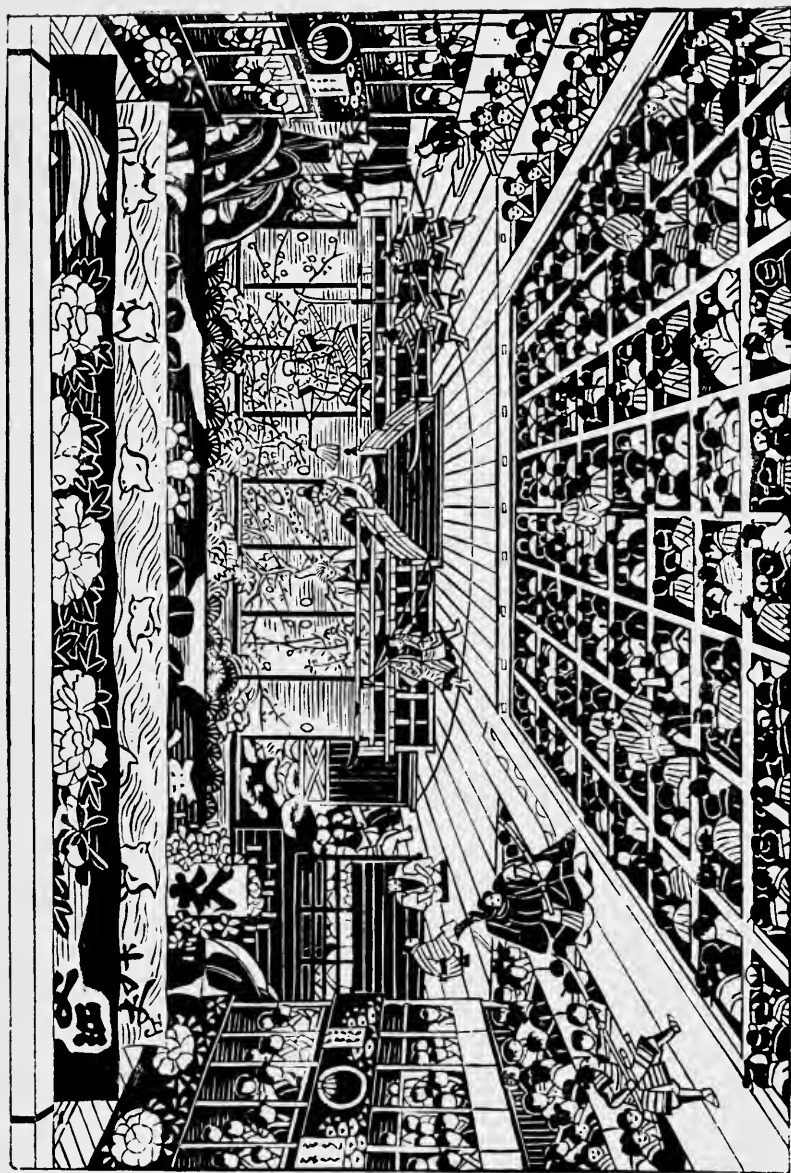
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JAPANESE PLAYS

(VERSIFIED).



A JAPANESE THEATRE.

JAPANESE PLAYS

(VERSIFIED).

BY THE LATE

THOMAS R. H. McCLATCHIE,
Interpreter, H.B.M.'s Consular Service, Japan.

EDITED BY HIS BROTHER,

ERNEST S. McCLATCHIE
(Author of "False Plumage," "Stefan Melikof," &c.).

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS,
DRAWN AND ENGRAVED BY JAPANESE ARTISTS.

New Edition.

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1890.

LONDON :
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13 WATERLOO PLACE, S.W.

PREFACE TO NEW EDITION.

THIS book was originally published at Yokohama eleven years ago, and—taking into consideration its success out there—it has been thought fit to bring out a New Edition, in the hope of the rhymes being found of some interest to readers in England, who may desire to become better acquainted with the style and character of play-acting in the Far East.

THE EDITOR.

WEST KENSINGTON, *July* 1890.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

THE following rhymes must not be taken as translations of the dramas to which they allude. They are merely efforts to sketch, in a cursory manner, the general outline of the plots of those dramas, for the especial benefit of Western readers. The great improvements that have recently been introduced on the Japanese stage have naturally given rise to a desire on the part of many foreign residents here to make some slight acquaintance with the general style and character of the plays represented. A Japanese play, as a rule, lasts for many hours, and it is questionable whether it would, if literally and fully translated, possess any interest for the foreign reader. The plan here followed has been to select one personage as the hero or heroine, and to give an outline of those scenes only in which that particular personage appears; for this reason several of these rhymes are termed 'Fragments.' A Japanese audience, though certainly sympathetic, differs considerably from a foreign one: the spectators here are by no means averse to showing their amusement when an unfortunate woman is murdered by mistake, but are easily moved to tears when the murderer finally commits suicide after a long speech garnished with grandiloquent allusions

to the spirit of 'loyalty' that caused him to perpetrate the outrage in the first instance. Thus, in endeavouring to versify these plays, no style has appeared so apt as that of the "Ingoldsby Legends," that delightful mixture of pathos and bathos, of true poetic expression and of jingling rhyme. This idea has been kept in view throughout.

The illustrations are from the clever pencil of Mr. Tachibana Unga, an official of the Imperial Japanese Military Department, and have been cut on blocks by Hisanaga Heizô, a wood-engraver of Tôkiô.

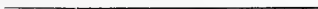
All these rhymes have already appeared in the columns of the "Japan Daily Herald," at Yokohama, and it is to the kind courtesy of the editor of that journal that the author is indebted for permission to reprint them in separate form.

YOKOHAMA, *August*, 1879.

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HAYANO KAMPEI.

THIS is a fragment from the play of the “Chiushin-gura,” one of the most popular, and certainly the best known of Japanese dramas. The tale of the “Forty-seven Rônin” who avenged the death of their feudal liege is, no doubt, sufficiently well known to our readers through the medium of Mr. A. B. Mitford’s *Tales of Old Japan*. The drama itself is exceedingly long, but amongst all its varied scenes there is scarcely one that so thoroughly engrosses the attention of a Japanese audience as that on which is founded the following rhyme. The name of Hayano Kampei is inseparably associated with the deeds of the valiant forty-seven; and tradition has it that, as a reward for his loyalty to the interests of his lord’s house, the fatal purse that was the indirect cause of his death was afterwards borne by one of the Rônin in their midnight onslaught on the mansion of their foe. But we will let the tale speak for itself.

Hayano Kampei ;

A Fragment from the Japanese Play of the “Chiushingura,” (the “Forty-seven Rônin,”)—as Performed at the Shimabara Theatre, Tôkiô, 1875.

YOICHIKAI, leading a woodcutter's life,
 Is bless'd with that treasure,—a virtuous wife ;
 And, as happens with most married folks who agree,
 The pair are as happy as happy can be :
 Though lowly their lot,
 And humble their cot,
 Though the winds may blow chill, or the sun beat down
 hot,—
 Yet little they reck, in their mountain retreat,
 Of the strife of the city that lies at their feet ;
 Content with each other, they dwell in the hills,
 Each halving the other's joys, labours, and ills ;
 Their pleasures they share,
 Their trials they bear,
 And, in fact, all their neighbours are wont to declare
 That they never yet saw such a jolly old pair !
 Their marriage is blessed with one child,—(who'd have
 thought her
 A woodcutter's offspring?)—a beautiful daughter ;—

So fair and so stately, for provinces round
 No Japanese damsel her equal was found ;
 So dutiful, charming, so gay and so free,
 And possessed, above all, with such happy *esprit* ;
 Her tasty attire might a Shôguness vex,—
 “*Munditiis*,” Horace would tell us, “*simplex*” !
 What wonder that envious neighbours should sneer,
 When her form they espy, or her praises they hear !
 What wonder the love-sick young men of the plain
 Should vie with each other her favour to gain !
 With suitors enough and to spare was she blessed,
 But wisely she chose, and her love she confessed
 To him who of all the swains loved her the best ;
 And she soon ‘named the day,’ (tho’ with tremulous
 voice)
 To Hayano Kampei, the youth of her choice !

The knot is tied,
 The blushing bride
 Must quit her mountain home,
 Must leave behind
 Her parents kind,
 In other lands to roam.

But Hayano whispers soft words in her ear,—
 Dispels all her fears, bids her be of good cheer,—
 And so whisks her off, and they both journey down
 To Akô, in Banshiu, his lord’s castle-town.

Now his chief, my lord Asano,—none need be told,—
 Is of lineage ancient, a *daimiô** bold ;
 But somehow or other he gets in a scrape,
 In a ‘regular fix,’—there’s no chance of escape,—

* *Daimiô*, a territorial noble.

So he puts a bold face on 't, displays no surprise,
 But commits *hara-kiri*,* and quietly dies !
 Of course his retainers all growl like the deuce
 At losing their incomes,—but that 's of no use ;
 So to North, West, and East they all scatter away,
 And the Hayanos go with their parents to stay.

What need to recall
 All the ills that befall,—
 How poverty holds the poor folks in its thrall,—
 How times, when once bad, still go on growing worse,
 (While the victims, despondent, now pray and now
 curse)
 Till at last they 're as bad as they ever can be,
 And the woodcutter's family 's quite ' up a tree ' ?
 Well, to cut matters short, then, it happens one day
 That our household is found in a very bad way ;
 Not a cash, not a ' red
 Cent,' or morsel of bread,—
 And a wicked thought enters Yoichibei's head !
 He beckons his wife, and a confabulation
 Ensues, in low tones, 'bout their sore tribulation.
 " Our daughter," says he, " is a regular prize,—
 A damsel so charming, so lovely, so wise,
 Is a rarity,—and, wife, I 'm sure you 'll agree,
 As we 've reared *her* since she was a child on your
 knee,
 That she now should help *us*, and—though you needn't
 tell her—
 'Twould be a good stroke could we manage to sell
 her !

* *Hara-kiri*, suicide by disembowelment.

'Twould enable us now to get something to eat,
And in time we, perhaps, might yet fall on our feet."
(Don't faint, gentle reader, nor call it a sin,
That a father should deal in his own kith and kin;
You've been brought up, perhaps, in a different
school,
In Japan, though, I hear, it's according to rule !)
Now, Yoichibei's wife
Wished to save her own life,
But she stood in great dread of a family strife;
To her husband's proposal, then, all she could say
Was, — "To-morrow, when Hayano's out of the
way!"

Yoichibei rises next morn with the sun,
Sees Hayano off with his dog and his gun,
And bids him take heed
Of himself, then with speed
Dons cloak and hat, pauses awhile for reflection,
And bolts at top pace in the other direction;
Goes down to the town, and soon finds he's in luck,
For a buyer turns up, and the bargain is struck.
Impatient, his ill-gotten gains he then 'collars,'
(I think the amount is about fifty dollars),
He 'shroffs' the whole sum,—'tis all right,—then he
borrows
A purse, puts it up, and next drowns all his sorrows
In a cup of good *saké*,* and starts home half 'tight,'
Having promised delivery that very night;
And he quiets his scruples,—that is, if he's any,—
By the thought that he's turned a felicitous penny!

* *Saké*, a liquor brewed from rice, the national beverage of Japan.

'Tis a lonely moor
At the ev'ning hour,
 And the moon 's behind a cloud,
And the shadows fall
Like a heavy pall,
 And the earth with darkness shroud ;
Not a leaf is stirred,
Not a sound is heard
 Save the howl of a distant dog,
Or the croak so harsh,
From the noisome marsh,
 Of the ever wakeful frog !
You can scarce distinguish the faint outline
Of yon rickety, ruin'd old Shintô shrine !

Yoichibei 's hastening back to his home,
And wishes he 'd reached it, I 'm sure, for to roam
In such darkness as this cannot be over nice,—
Never mind, he 'll be there,—so he thinks,—in a trice.
But the way it is long, and his legs they are old,
And the moor 's heavy walking, the night it is cold ;
He 's close by the shrine, and, quite pleased at the
 sight,
Says,—“ I 'll rest for a moment, and just strike a light,
And before going on to my supper of tripe
Will solace my cares with a whiff of my pipe.”

His pipe being finished,
His cares, too, diminished,
He thinks he 'll proceed, but will first take a sight
Of his ill-gotten cash, to make sure it 's all right ;—
 But while holding his prize
Close up to his eyes,
The better to view it, there comes a surprise !

From the shrine, which resembles an old rabbit hutch,
Forth darts a long arm, which the money does clutch !

A noise,—a crash,—

A stunning smash,—

A fearful form,—and a sword-blade's flash,—

And a robber has settled Yoichibei's 'hash' !

As this 'knight of the road' proves to be a hard
hitter,

And the blow's what the Japanese term a 'pear-
splitter,'

(That's full on the crown), the old woodman goes down,
With a shriek that is probably heard in the town !

The robber's a jovial man in his way,

He looks on such accidents merely as play ;

He counts up the money,—a satisfied smile

Illumines his villainous features the while ;

When, just in front,

Is heard the grunt

Of a boar that is fleeing away from a hunt-

er, who follows with shouts,—this the robber does scare,

The purse he lets fall, and runs off like a hare.

Just then the moonlight

Gives the hunter a sight

Of his prey (as he thinks)—he's not up to it quite,

But he'll risk a long shot,—so, with sportsmanly
vigour,

Claps his gun to his shoulder, and straight pulls the
trigger ;

The boar goes off scatheless, but oh ! and alack !

The shot hits the highwayman plump in the back.

The hunter—'tis Hayano—quicken his pace,

"I've got him, that's certain ; about here's the place."



DEATH OF YOICHIBEL.

So he gropes in the dark, like a man full of toddy,
 And at last stumbles over Yoichibei's body.
 "Hurrah! here 's the boar!"—and he draws, in a
 crack,
 From his belt a stout cudgel, with which he gives
 whack
 Upon whack
 On the back
 Of his parent defunct, on his sides, on his head,
 Till he's certain the beast, as he thinks it, is dead;
 Never dreaming—(how should he?—the corpse he ne'er
 saw)—
 That he's only been thrashing his father-in-law!

A rope he produces, intending to bind
 His prey on his back,—he stoops,—what does he find?
 Oh, horror!—a moonbeam shines forth,—pale and
 wan
 He beholds, staring upwards, the face of a *man*!
 Straightway all his joy
 Turns to 'otototoi,
 (That's a word, reader, known to the youngest school-
 boy;
 But if you by chance have forgotten your Greek,
 To enlighten your ignorance here I will speak;—
 Victor Hugo explains it, then, dearest *lecteur*,
 As a term that *parfaitement exprime la douleur*).

Over Hayano's face
 Comes an awful grimace,
 As he thinks of the deed he has done;
 Though not truly to blame,
 He's so covered with shame
 That he once again charges his gun;

Then the muzzle he points
To the place where the joints
Of his neck fasten on to his breast ;
Puts it well in position,
With sighs of contrition,
And then,—(though it must be confessed
With a hand somewhat shaky)—he finally fires,
Tumbles flat on his back like a log, and—expires?—

No such thing, reader, somehow the aim proves untrue,
And our hero soon rises without more ado.
After all, it's sheer folly, he thinks, thus to die,—it's all madness,—he will not a second time try it !
After all, matters possibly might have been worse ;
And just here his hand happens to fall on the purse.
This settles the question,—the money he takes,
And starts for his home ' in a couple of shakes,'
Quite without an idea of the dreadful reality,
Knowing nought of the poor, old deceased's personality.

But as all this is passing, the night has grown late,
And the women at home in the cottage await,
With hearts somewhat anxious, their husbands' return ;
Their stomachs are empty, they're longing to learn
What the chances of food are, or how they shall sup,
When a knock at the door quickly rouses them up ;—
“ Yoichibei ! ”—“ Hayano ! ”—loud they exclaim,—
The door they fling open,—what's this ?—by the flame
Of the fire on the hearth they see, leading the van,
Two ugly old hags and an ugly old man ;

In the rear are some coolies who carry a chair,
And who curse with loud voices the cold midnight air.
The ugly old trio advance, and they say—
“ We ’ve come for the damsel we purchased to-day ! ”

Just fancy the look Mrs. Hayano wears !
She can’t make it out, so she stands and she stares ;
While Yoichibei’s wife, who of course ‘twigs’ the
 joke,
Invites them to enter,—they laughingly poke
One another’s lean ribs, and then sit down and smoke.
 Their errand ’s explained,
 They can’t be detained,
Their home in the town must at once be regained ;
“ So give us the damsel, old lady,—be quick ;
The cash has been paid, — look alive, there ’s a
 brick ! ”

Now Mrs. H. is in deadly fear,
 And ghastly is her look,
As she views those hags with looks so drear,
As she watches that old man’s ugly sneer,
As she marks her mother’s cunning leer,
 And the memorandum-book
In which is noted the price they ’ve paid
For herself—poor timid, helpless maid !
’Tis *shikata ga nai*,—(that ’s the way that the Japs
Say, “ No help for it ”)—so she just packs up her
 traps ;
And gets into the chair,
 Which the coolies then bear
Aloft on their shoulders. No prospect is there
Of escaping her fate, howsoe’er she may try,
So she sits herself down for a hearty good cry !

The ugliest hag stays behind for awhile,
Now chatting, now smoking, now helping to pile
On the fire some fresh brushwood,—when, sudden, a
knock

At the door gives the pair a perceptible shock !
The hag she turns white, Mrs. Y. she turns blue,
As Hayano enters without more ado.

“ Mrs. Y. ! I ’ve been lucky ; some dollars I ’ve got,
That will help us to buy something nice for the pot ;
Never mind how I earned them,—they ’ll just save our
life—

But, hallo !—by the way, what ’s become of my wife ? ”

You can fancy the tumult to which this gives rise,—
The agonised look in the fond husband’s eyes,—
Mrs. Y.’s terror-stricken and cringing servility,—
The beetle-browed hag’s oaths and open scurrility !
Till Hayano flings down the purse with a smack,
And roundly exclaims that he ’ll soon buy her back.

“ What’s the ‘ damage,’ you crone ?—Fifty dollars ?—
that ’s nice ;

Here’s th’ identical sum ; fetch her back in a
trice ! ”

With threats and with frown

He stalks up and down,

His mother-in-law hides her face in her gown ;
But the hag, on her knees at the side of the fire,
Examines the purse, and then turns to inquire
As to where he obtained it,—“ it ’s very much like
A purse of my own ” ;—here a thought seemed to
strike

Poor Hayano’s mind,—but again at the door
Comes a rap (that ’s the third one) ; he crosses the
floor,

And opens the portal,—sees three of his neighbours,
Who tell that, whilst bound to their homes from their
labours,

They happened to pass o'er the moor, and there found
Yoichibei's corpse lying stiff on the ground.

Before their eyes
The body lies,
The widow howls, and moans, and cries;
Not liking to witness such sad tribulation,
The neighbours troop off in some slight consterna-
tion.

With gleaming eyes
The hag does rise,
And produces a *second* purse,—just the same size,
Shape, and hue as the one which our hero had brought,
That he starts at the sight like a person distraught.

“Look here, Mrs. Y.!”

She exclaims, with a cry
That makes Hayano jump, tho' he scarce can tell
why;

“Look here!—these two purses belong both to *me*;
One I lent to your husband this morning when he
To sell yonder damsel to us did agree!

The murder, I say,
Is plain as the day,
This ruffian met your old man on the way
To your house, struck him down, and the money did
rob;—

(Poor dear! what a terrible crack on his nob!)

These purses, I swear,
Well his treason declare;
The murdered lies here, and the murderer 's *there*!”

And she points to our hero, who horror-struck stands,
As the hag grasps his arm with her long skinny hands :—
His face assumes an ashen hue,
His parchèd lips are dry ;
The women seize him at the view,
And raise a hue and cry ;
The hag has grabbed him from behind,
The widow from before,—
They rate him first with words unkind,
Then hurl him to the floor,
And with some handy faggot-sticks belabour him full sore !

Against the pair he nought can do, save loudly curse
his fate,
While blows descend amain upon his back, and sides, and
pate ;
Till, almost dead, with aching head, he 's in a corner
thrown ;—
He opes his eyes, and strives to rise, and thus he makes
his moan :—
“ Alas ! that I, a *samurai* * of noble house and fame,
Should thus so undeservedly have earned a felon's name !
In very truth,
No crime, in sooth,
Can at my door be laid,
Though facts may seem,
You rightly deem,
To prove my wicked trade.
I never slew Yoichibei intentionally, though
I own my bullet wrought his death,—but then, I 'd have
you know

* *Samurai*, a man of the military class, entitled to carry two swords.





SUICIDE OF KAMPEI.

I aimed but at a flying boar. Alas! what dire mis-
chance
Could e'er have caused the ball from off some tree aside
to glance,
And wound my dear old *père*-in-law! Enough, no more
say I,—
Though Hayano dishonoured live, he can with honour
die,
I'll make my exit as becomes a gentle *samurai*!"

His dirk he grips,
His mantle strips,
Then, with a fixed smile,
The blade he draws,—
A moment's pause,—
He looks at it awhile,
Examines it from end to end,—makes up his mind,—and
then,
He sheathes the steel, up to the hilt, in his own abdo-
men!

Most dramatists like, at the end of a play,
To bring on the stage the whole glitt'ring array
Of the actors;—this rule,
In the Japanese school,
Is the same, without doubt,
For it here comes about
Mrs. Hayano suddenly makes her appearance,—
(Let's hope from her captors she's got a full clearance);—
But alas! what a sight for her conjugal eyes!
On the floor,
In his gore,
With a wound deep and sore,
Her heart's-beloved Hayano weltering lies!

Such a climax of evils would worry a saint,
So she sinks on the ground, and goes off in a faint.

Next enter two gentlemen, bravely attired,
Tho' their garments are travel-stained, smirched, and
 bemired ;

By the crest

On their breast

It may plainly be guessed

They're two of the vassals who had to disperse
When gallant lord Asano met his reverse.

Poor Hayano strives to sit upright,

And welcomes the pair with words polite :

They tell how the chieftain's untimely doom

Has cast on his vassals a moody gloom,

And how they've resolved to have the head

Of the man by whose means their lord is dead ;

Though many have sworn to assist the feat,

The number, they say, is not yet complete,—

“ One name on the muster-roll yet we require,

And Hayano Kampei's the man we desire ! ”

Poor Kampei groans,—he's growing pale,—

He feebly falters forth his tale ;

The guests perceive his altered glance,

They mourn his fate ; and then, by chance,

 They both draw near

 The dead man's bier ;

What's this ?—how's that ?—what have we here ?

 They roll their eyes

 In wild surprise,

Then point to the spot where the body lies ;—

They seize on the shroud—aside they pull it—

The wound's from a *sword-blade*, not a *bullet* !

'Tis proved that he's innocent!—oh what a 'muff'
To go and destroy himself while in a huff,
When a casual glance would have proved the clear fact
That Yoichibei's death was some other man's act!

And, to clear up the myst'ry, there now rushes in
A messenger, breathless, and wet to the skin
(For it's raining in torrents), who shouts from the
door

That the corpse of the highwayman's found on the
moor;—

He's a bandit who'd long robbed, remorseless and
cruel,

And the folks all rejoice he's at last 'got his gruel.'
The man himself dances,—his joy knows no lack
Since a monster like this has been *shot through the back*!

But Hayano's life flickers low in its socket,
When the gentlemen turn, and produce from a pocket
The roll of the names of those vassals so true,
And one says, with a smile,—“Mr. Hayano, you
By your soldier-like bearing have shown yourself fit
To be classed with the rest of us,—just wait a bit,—
Quick, a pen there!—I'll here add your name at the
heel

Of the list, and will trouble you now for your seal!”
See, the dying man drags himself over the floor,
And he puts for his seal some few drops of his gore,—
Then suddenly sinks, and, with fast-closing eyes,
Falls forward,* and so like a gentleman dies!

* This was held to be the proper mode in which a person committing *hara-kiri* should sink to the ground. To facilitate falling in this posture, the long sleeves of the outer garment (the upper part of which was thrown off from the shoulders) were usually tucked tightly under the knees, as the man knelt, or rather squatted, in Japanese style.

What was done, what was said,
When poor Kampei was dead,—
If the widow e'er got the facts right in her head,—
Are matters not mentioned in subsequent hist'ry,
In fact, I believe that they still are a myst'ry;
Such being the case, then,—since nobody knows 'em,
I'll leave you, kind reader, yourself to suppose 'em !

MORAL.

I.

If you're thinking of suicide, pray do not flurry;
For a thing is ne'er done *well* that's done in a hurry !

II.

When out hunting, beware
Of your gun, and take care
That you don't yourself fall into some ugly snare;
And mind you don't murder, where'er you may be,
A *boar* that's not spelt with an *a* but an *e* !

III.

Last of all,—should you find, when your pockets are empty,
A slave-market close by, and handy, and tempty,
Remember Yoichibei's fate,—what it tells is,
Don't sell your own daughter,—sell somebody else's !



THE FATAL ERROR.

THE “Kaga-Sôdô,” the drama from which the following fragment is taken, is, like the “Chiushin-gura,” founded on fact. The intrigues therein related are supposed to convey some idea of those that actually occurred in the middle of the 17th century at the Castle-town of Kanazawa, the seat of the Maëda family, who were lords of the rich province of Kaga in which that town is situated. The particular scenes described in the verses are no doubt highly coloured, and it is but fair to state that the tale of the “Kaga-Sôdô,” as represented on the stage, differs considerably from the real occurrences as recorded in Japanese historical annals. Be that as it may, the drama is an exceedingly popular one; and although, as a whole, it is perhaps slightly tedious, those particular scenes which relate to the exciting adventures of one of the retainers of the lord of Kaga may possibly prove of some interest. We leave our friends to judge for themselves.



The Fatal Error;

*A Fragment from the Japanese Play of "Kaga Sôdô"
("The Disturbance in Kaga"), as Performed at the
Saruwaka-machi Theatre, Asakusa, Tokio.*

WITH a sorrowful face, and a mystified frown,
The Councillor wandereth up and adown :
There 's a glance in his eye
That is plainly *shimpai*,*
And the badge on his mantle is pulled all awry ;
His chin is unshaven ; on top of his pate
His queue draggles down in a sad dirty state ;
In the broad girdle laced
Round his corpulent waist
Are his swords in a fashion most slovenly placed,
With the short one *inside*, which, a child could
descry,
Is a mode quite unworthy a true *samurai* ;

* *Shimpai*, troubled, concerned.

His mien is dejected ; o'ercome by his woe,
 He looks more like a guy than a gallant *karô* ! *
 And, in view of these symptoms, to think you're
 inclined
 That a something doth trouble the Councillor's mind.

Yes, you're right, gentle reader ; he cannot refuse
 To admit that he's down with a fit of the blues ;
 And just here, I would pray
 You'll permit me to say
 That the question of *colour*'s quite strange in its way ;
 Thus, a man owns he's *blue*, but I've never yet seen
 Any person so bold as confess himself *green* !
 'To return to our muttuns' from this slight digression,
 I'll tell you the cause of our worthy's depression ;
 If a man e'er had 'blues,' 'tis the case with our friend,
 And, of course, there's a lady to blame in the end !

 " Oh ! alas the day,"
 Doth the Councillor say,
 " When our late Kashiû Sama the Good passed away !
 While he lived, peace and plenty prevailed in our land,
 And the peasants all blessed his beneficent hand ;
Then officials were honest, *then* taxes were light,
Then our harvests were rich, and our prospects were
 bright,
 And a tub of good *saké* was broached ev'ry night !
 And we fancied—poor fools!—'twould be always the
 same,
 As we bragged of our clan and our *daimiô*'s fame :

* *Karô*, literally "elder," a Councillor of a *daimiô*. The office was hereditary, and some nobles had several Councillors.

But, alas and alack !
One fine day an attack
Of sore sickness prostrated our lord on his back ;
Some they swore it was *kak'kê*,* some vowed 'twas from
 drink,
They were all of them wrong,—for my own part, I
 think
Any fool could have seen with but half of an
 eye,
That the time had arrived for his lordship to die ;
His last hour was at hand, he perceived without
 telling,
So at once set in order his household and dwelling ;
He looked out for his heir a most charming young
 wife,
And then, greatly lamented, departed this life.
Full of years and of honours, he died without pain,
And was buried,—and then, there commenced a new
 reign ;
For his son (would that sad date could pass by un-
 heeded !)
To his lands, titles, cash-box, and castle succeeded.

“Some few months passed away,
And the Lady O Tei
O'er our young chief's affections retained her first
 sway ;
And so gentle, so kind, so devoted was she,
That of all the retainers no man could foresee
That the lord and his lady would e'er disagree.

* *Kak'kê*, a disease common in Japan, marked by paralytic and dropsical symptoms.

Yet, ere long,—how it happened I'm sure I can't
tell,—

The gay youth 'gainst her counsels began to rebel,—
Paid attentions, in fact, to a frail singing girl,
Who ensnared his weak heart, set his brain in a
whirl,

And so stole his affections completely away
From the wife of his bosom, poor Lady O Tei !
Till at last the enchantress, without more ado,
Made our lord bring her home as his wife *Number*
Two !

“ Oh ! ne'er can I forget that morn,
The darkest day that e'er did dawn,
That viewed our chieftain's fall !
When, faithless to his loving spouse,
Forgetful of his plighted vows,
He sank in folly's thrall !
Oh ! would he ne'er had known the wile
Of wanton Hidé's laughing smile,
Or seen her witching eye !
Far better 'twere that, hushed his breath,
And stilled his heart by friendly death,
He in the grave should lie !

“ Yet the Lady O Hidé, I'll frankly concede,
Is a damsel of marvellous beauty,—indeed,
There's a weird, supernatural loveliness glows
From the crown of her head to the tips of her toes !
E'en when I, an old man, first encountered her
glance,
I could feel my poor heart give a palpable dance ;
While the blood in my veins coursed with feverish
heat,

Till I hardly could well
 Have attempted to tell
 If I stood, at the time, on my head or my feet !
 Nay, I scarce think she 's human : for ne'er have I
 seen
 Any maiden of parentage mortal whose mien
 Was at once so majestic, enchanting, alluring !
 (I'm convinced she 's a demon ; the thing 's past
 enduring !)
 Then that smile so bewitching, those luminous eyes !
 (Oh ! I'll swear she 's a badger or fox * in disguise !)
 Yet,—to think that that form,
 Which an iceberg might warm,
 Should be that of a devil !—My eyes ! what a storm
 Would have broke on my foolish, devoted old head,
 If so dire a suspicion in public I 'd said !
 Yet the thing 's past a doubt, from that sad, fatal
 day
 Our whole *matsurigoto* † has gone to decay ;
 While our hapless young lord by th' enchantress will
 linger ;
 (She can turn him with ease round her lily-white
 finger !)

“ And, in view of these facts, and of signs not a few
 That dire mischief is brewing, what *am* I to do ?

 For the peasants all say,
 In a gloomy, stern way,
 That they *won't* find the taxes they're ordered to pay ;

* Alluding to popular Japanese superstitions. Foxes and badgers are credited, in Japanese legends, with possessing the power of assuming at will the likeness of human beings.

† *Matsurigoto*, government; administration.

I'm afraid of some *ikki*,* I tremble with dread,
And I curse the enchantress,—*I would she were dead!*”

Here the puzzled *karô*,
With a face full of woe,
Shakes his head, blows his nose, and declares it's ‘no
go,’
Gives it up, and confesses, while heaving a sigh,
’Tis a regular case of *shikata ga nai*! †
From behind the low hedge in the Councillor's rear,
With a loud rustling noise, see! a form doth appear;
And this form, as you yet more attentively scan,
The proportions assumes of a handsome young man.
The *karô* at the sound,
Gives a start,—with a bound
The youth springs o’er the edge, quickly glances
around
To the right and the left,—not a soul's in the street—
So he sinks on his knees at the Councillor's feet!

“Hallo! Kwansuké, you rascal, how dare you come
here?
Why, I thought I dismissed you my service last
year!”
“Oh! I pray, good my lord, you'll vouchsafe to give
ear,
And to list to my tale,
For I'm sure I shan't fail
To explain my past conduct;”—his master turns
pale.

* *Ikki*, agrarian riot.

† “No help for it!”

“ Only fancy,” thinks he, “ what a dreadful mishap
If my threats should have chanced to be heard by this
chap !

I’ll just hark to his tale, without anger or scoff,
And, that done, I’ve no doubt I can soon ‘ bluff him
off.’ ”

So the Councillor here, as old Horace would tell us,
“ *Ut iniquæ* (that means ‘ stubborn’) *mentis asellus*,
Demittit aurículas ” (that phrase can’t hurt you),
And, in fact, of ‘ necessity dire ’ makes a virtue ;
His retainer looks up with an air of combined
Joy and fear, clears his throat, and thus eases his
mind :—

“ Words alone

Can’t atone,

I most freely will own,

For my past misdemeanors ;—my faults I bemoan,
And I would that whilst I in your household did stay
More befitting behaviour I’d tried to display ;

For I’m fully aware

That my conduct while there

Was by no means *en règle*, nor yet on the square.
I disturbed the whole place with my riot and noise,
For my fault was, in short, I was ‘ one of the boys ’ ;
And no matter what mischief the youngsters might
brew,

I was safe to be found at the head of the crew ;
There was no one so apt at concocting a hoax,
Or at starting a ‘ sell,’ or low practical jokes ;

I’d dress up, for a lark,

When it chanced to be dark,

In a sheet, like a ghost, promenading the park,

When I'd frighten the waiting-maids out of their
wits,

And once drove the fat cook pretty nigh into fits ;
Till at last to yourself I once offered some 'slack,'
For which you, most deservedly, gave me the sack !
Thus dismissed in disgrace, I continued to roam,
Cut by all my old chums, without shelter or home ;
Till at last I encountered a kindly old man

Who had known me in youth,

And who promised in truth

To befriend me if I'd begin new. I began.

I took service with him, and I've worked in his
store,

(He's a dealer in dry goods) this twelvemonth and
more;

But I burn

To return

From this peddling concern

To the life of a gentleman, once more to learn

How to wield with precision the lance and the
blade,

In the stead of the cloth-yard that's used 'in the
trade.'

Oh ! forgive me, kind master, forgive and forget

All my former misdeeds, and I'll prove to you yet

That your gracious beneficence largely can tend

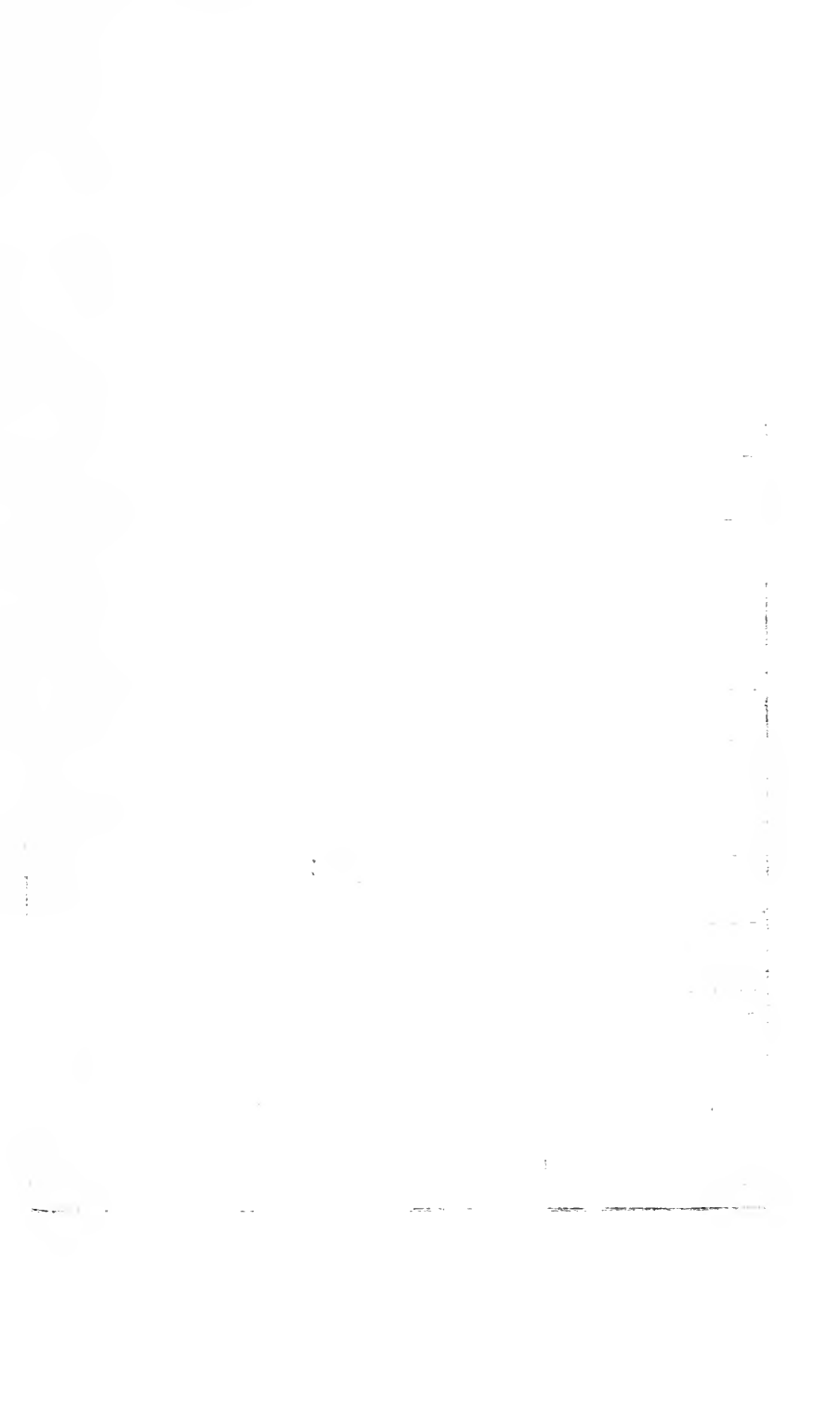
To assist me my reprobate ways to amend ! ”

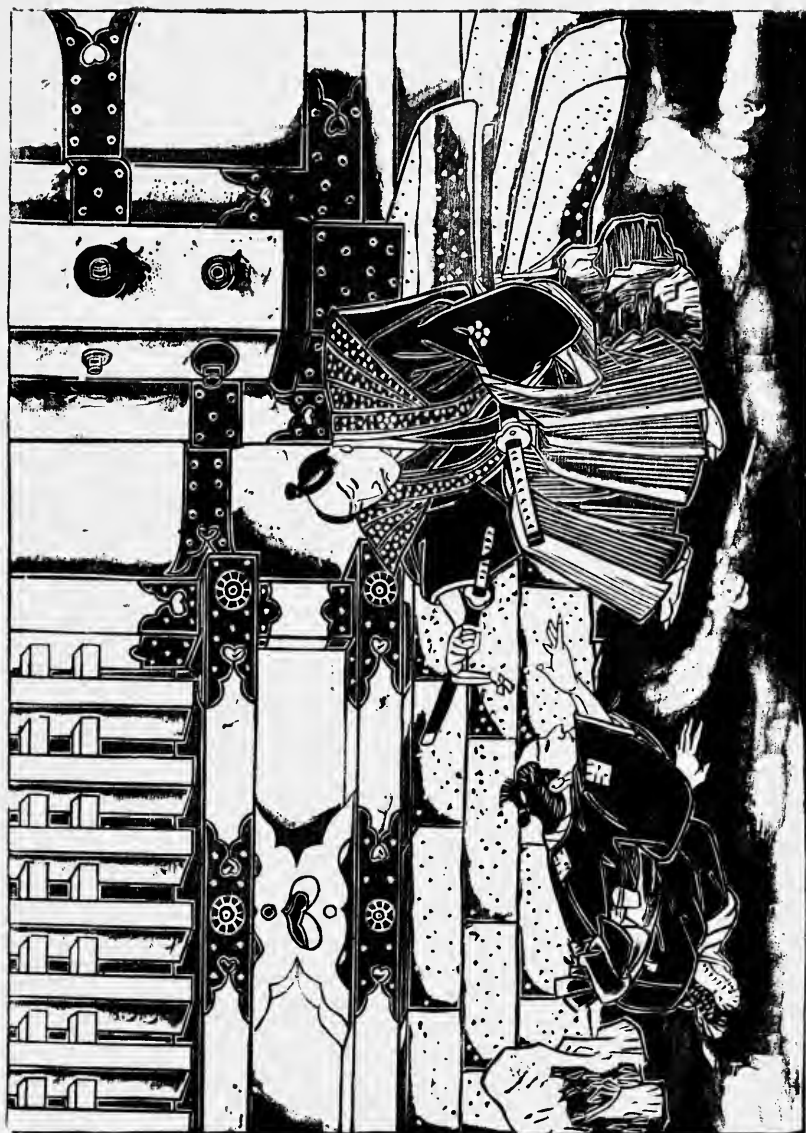
“ Well, well,” says his *ci-devant* master, “ 'tis true

That I always had, Kwansuké, a liking for you ;

That your past life was wrong there can be no
denial,

Yet I'll not refuse once more to give you a trial ;





THE COUNCILLOR AND KWANSUKÉ.

As I don't like to jump on a man when he's down,
I'll assist you to try and achieve some renown.
To ensure true success there is nought, I've oft felt,
Like red gold in the purse, and sharp steel at the
 belt;
You've just spoken of wielding the blade and the
 lance,—
Take this dirk, then, and purse,—these will give you a
 chance
To distinguish yourself by some valorous deed,
By some gallant *tegara*,*—and then, as the meed
 Of your vict'ry, I'd fain
 Treat the past with disdain,
And install you, thus proved, in my service again."

"Thanks, noble sir!" doth Kwansuké cry,
 "For this thy kind goodwill;
I'll do some deed of merit high,
 To prove I'm worthy still;
For Kwansuké's breast is bold and leal,
 Of that be not afraid;
His heart is true as the burnished steel
 Of a Masamuné blade!" †

With a low genuflection, the gifts he doth seize,
Holds them up to his forehead, then sinks on his
 knees,
And his face to the paving-stones flatly doth squeeze,

* *Tegara*, act of merit, doughty deed.

† Masamuné, one of the most famous swordsmiths of Japan, lived from 1264 to 1343 A.D. It is, in Japanese literature, a common metaphor to compare a loyal heart to a trusty sword-blade.

With that sibilant noise which, as some writers mention,
'Doth an attitude show of respectful attention !'
The Councillor smiles, bids his servant be brave,
Turns away, and with features once more set and grave,
Passes in through the gateway that stands on his right,
And the large heavy doors shut him out from our sight.

Kwansuké lies for a moment, and then, with a bound
Like a harlequin, rises again from the ground.
First he pauses, and drops a salt tear at the view
Of the strong massive portal he dare not pass through ;
(Like the Peri who, Thomas Moore's tale doth relate,
Stood in sorrow and wept near the Paradise Gate ;)
Next, the purse he unties,
And evinces surprise
At the rich store of *nibu* * that greets his glad eyes,
Rolls it up as before, and conceals it beneath
The wide folds of his dress ; then he draws from its sheath
The bright sword that's to carve him a fortune anew,
And stands almost entranced as the steel meets his view :
"What a beautiful weapon ! how perfectly made !
And what exquisite fittings ! how trenchant a blade !
And see here, on the sheath, too, quite plain to behold,
The good Councillor's badge worked in lacquer and gold !

* Gold pieces, worth about fifty cents each.

Good ! this sword shall remind me, where'er I may go,
 Of the grand debt that I to my master now owe :
 If he 'd only a foe ! then to prove my sincerity
 I'd be down on the chap with most *killing* asperity !
 Yet, just hold for a moment,—yes, didn't he say
 That the Lady O Hidé had caused his dismay ?

And he furthermore said

That he ' would she were dead,'

And invoked sundry curses to fall on her head :

She's ' ensnared our young lord ' ?—then my duty is
 plain ;

I'll take pretty good care she don't do so again,

For in view of the fact that her conduct is *sich*,"

(Rhyme demands that word, reader,) " *I'll ' go for ' the
 witch !* "

Having made up his mind and determined his victim,
 He at once flies away as though Benkei* had kick'd
 him !

The scene is changed. A lordly hall
 Before our eyes is laid ;
 On post and ceiling, beam and wall,
 Are paintings rare portrayed ;
 Here vase of price, there silken shawl,
 Is carelessly displayed ;
 And gilded badges plain declare,
 'Tis Kashiû Sama's castle fair.

* Benkei, the Hercules of Japan. He lived in the latter half of the twelfth century.

Lovely ladies, gay and bright,
Pass in groups before our sight ;
Dainty maidens, tall and slim,
Fair of face, and lithe of limb ;
There, the fairest 'midst the throng,
Witching Hidé moves along ;
Far outshines each rival, far
As the comet shames the star,
As the snow-white *sagi** shows
'Midst a flock of sable crows !
Blind to all, on her we gaze ;
Listen, while I sing her praise.

Imprimis, a nose, which (though perfect, *I*'d say),
Some *might* deem a trifle too much *retroussé* ;
Next, a sweet dimpled chin, and two cherry-red lips,
With a smile that e'en Venus's own might eclipse ;—
But my Muse says "Enough !"
And turns off in a huff ;
Of description she thinks you have quite *quantum suff.* ;
And thus hearing her rail,
All my energies fail.
As to paint the fair damsel mere words can't avail,
I'll give up the hard task, and go on with my tale ;
Leaving each of my readers to fill in the rest
As to him (or to *her*) may appear to be best.
Yet I own I'm inclin'd
First to speak out my mind,
Thus,—I wouldn't give much for the man
Who can not in his heart-strings a tender spot find
For the daughters of lovely Japan !

* *Sagi*, the white "paddy-bird"; allusion is here made to a Japanese proverb.

And this one fact I 'll tell my Muse,
 Nor heed her angry tone,—
 Stood *I* in Kashiû Sama's shoes,
 I 'd do as *he* has done !

To resume, then ;—'tis winter, the sky 's dull and drear
 As is mostly the case at this season of year ;

And foot-deep on the ground
 Lies the snow all around

The proud castle, so thick that it deadens the sound
 Of the peasant's slow footsteps, as plodding he goes
 Down the road to the town, with his fingers and toes
 Quite benumbed, while long icicles hang from his nose !

(And just here I may say

It 's quite strange, by the way,

How the Japanese love snowy scenes to portray
 On those long *kakémono* * you notice each day ;

If you order 'a winter scene,' gladly I 'll lay

Ten to one—that 's long odds, but there 's 'nary ' mistake
 in it—

That they paint you a snow-storm, and mandarin-drake
 in it !)

To-day fair Hidé fain would go

To view the landscape o'er,

Clothed in its garb of spotless snow ;

Her train is at the door,

And Lady Hidé's palanquin

Too long has 'stopped the way,'

And yet she lingers still within ;

What makes my lady stay ?

* *Kakémono*, long hanging scrolls, fitted with rollers at the top and foot, used to decorate the walls of a room.

The reason, kind reader, I'll tell you full soon,
Her ladyship's fainted, gone off in a swoon!—
What a shocking catastrophe! in rush her maids,
Bearing hartshorn, burnt feathers, and sundry more
aids

To restore animation; her system is strong,
And she 'comes to' completely before very long.
Ah! Lady O Hidé! was't purposely done?
Was that sickness a *feint* in more senses than one?
Were you warned to beware, by some merciful dream,
Of yon dark form awaiting you down by the stream?

True or false, I can't say,
Be that all as it may,
The fact stands,—'twas the death-knell of Lady O Tei!
For, on hearing the tumult, that much-injured dame
Rushes forth, her eyes gleaming with jealousy's flame;
“Ha! gone off in a faint?” mutters she,—“let her
stay!

And, as *she* can't go out, I suppose that *I* may;
'Tis a sin to keep coolies thus waiting all day.”
With a glance at her rival stretch'd prone on the floor,
She steps into the litter, and starts from the door.

'Tis a wintry day,
And the sun's last ray
O'er the landscape pure and white
Is sinking slow,
And the sparkling snow
Is tinged with its golden light;
And the piercing blast
Sends driving past

The snow in feath'ry flake,
Where the willows rear
Their forms so drear
Beside the frozen lake ;
And the trees are bare,
Through the chill, bleak air
Is the curlew's whistle heard,—
The curlew wild,
By Bret Harte styled
' That melancholy bird ! '—

(But, indeed, the poor curlew has plenty of reason
To be rather down-hearted at such a bad season ;
For, in fact, 'tis enough to depress any *man*,
To be snow-bound, by night, on a moor in Japan !)

Yet there's *one* man, at least, who cares nought for the
snow ;

On his hands and his knees he creeps ' stealthily slow,'
As if dreading detection, to where on the bank
Of the stream stands a patch of reeds, slimy and dank ;
Soon their shelter he gains, and there crouches full
low,

While his foot-prints are hid by the thick-falling snow ;
There he silently lies,
Ever straining his eyes
Towards the height where the castle's tall battlements
rise

In a huge, looming mass 'fore the darkening skies.

Is he stalking a deer ?

Does he strive to get near

To the wary wild goose, in the hope of a shot ?

No ; I'm sure I can boldly affirm he does *not* ;

No ; he's bound, to *my* eyes, on no errand so tame,

For his look makes me fancy he seeks nobler game ;

And I think, with *one* stroke (if the truth must be told)

He'll have killed rather more than a game-bag can hold !

See him rise once again—

For a moment remain

Fix'd and stern—then prostrate himself flat on the plain !

He has sighted his prey ! — hark ! a *click*—then a pause—

Then a dull, sliding sound—we can *feel* that he draws

From its scabbard the hunting-knife, soon to be dyed

In the blood of his quarry !—he turns to one side,—

With a back-handed twitch flings the sheath on the snow,—

But reveals, while so doing, a face that we know !

It is Kwansuké !—depend on 't, the deed will be done,

For he's plainly gone in for 'the whole hog or none' !

See ! from out the dark shadows obscuring the plain,

With a slow, steady tramp comes the nobleman's train ;

All so silent, so solemn, you'd think that you view

Not a body of men, but some weird spectral crew !

Through their ranks not a sound, not a whisper is breathed.

Each retainer's sword-handle's in oil-paper sheathed ;

As a fence 'gainst the storm,

And to keep himself warm,

In a rain-coat each man has envelop'd his form ;

On their feet thick straw sandals are carefully laced,

And their heads with large round hats of bamboo are graced ;

Till, in fact, each stout vassal appears to our eyes

Like an overgrown mushroom of marvellous size !



THE ATTACK ON THE TRAIN.

In the midst, on their shoulders, six coolies uphold
The gay litter, all deck'd with blue velvet and gold,—
The gay litter, in short, of the Lady O Tei ;
And behind come more coolies to act as relay ;
While the lance and the halberd, the plume, and the spear,
All around their fair mistress her vassals uprear ;
Such the emblems of rank which you always might see
Round a Japanese noble of lofty degree.
Slowly marches the train,—some fatality leads
It direct towards that ill-omen'd dark patch of reeds ;
In a moment—so swift that it plainly appals
E'en the boldest among them—the thunderbolt falls !

Hark to the agonizing cries,
The shrieks of pain that loudly rise !
The work of death young Kwansuké plies
Amidst his startled foes !

These on their comrades wildly call,
Those turn to fight,—'tis useless all—
Man after man they reel and fall

Beneath his deadly blows !

At the onset the vassals are scared with dismay,
As with strength superhuman he forces his way
Towards the litter,—but then

They all rally like men ;

And just here, reader kind, if I 'd only the pen
Of the ' Press Correspondents ' who 're granted facilities
For observing those sad Russo-Turkish hostilities,
(It would seem as the war had engrossed their whole heart
in it),

I 'd describe to you now

Such a rattling good row

As would make you quite anxious yourself to take part
in it !

For at once I'd narrate, without pause or ahem,
How they lay on to him, and he 'lams' into them—
How their hats and their cloaks are flung quickly
aside—

How they tug at their sword-hilts, in oil-paper tied,
(Far too tightly, alas!)—how they hack and they
hew

At th' assailant, who hacks, cuts, and thrusts at them
too,

Till the dead and the wounded lie scatter'd around,
While their life-blood empurples the snow on the
ground!

At such writing, however, I'm not quite *au fait*,
So will merely describe the 'fag end' of the fray:
See! the last coolie drops, almost cleft to the chin,
And our hero's alongside the gay palanquin;
See! he tears down the blind, forces open the door—
Then a long wild shriek rises—the tragedy's o'er!
Here I think with Sir Walter 'twere sorrow to tell'
The full tale of the sad 'butcher-work that befel';
So suffice it to mention that Lady O Tei
Will not trouble her hair-dresser much from to-day!

With a furious shout,
In a menacing rout,
(For, *at last*, ev'ry man has his *katana** out)
Here the remnant of vassals come up at a run;
But too slow to catch Kwansuké!—his foul errand's
done,
So he heads for the stream at the deuce of a pace,
Like an athlete who starts for a hundred yards' race:

* *Katana*, the long Japanese sword, as opposed to the *wakizashi* or dirk.

Soon he reaches its brink, having 'dodged' all his foes,
Plunges in—and the dark waters over him close !

Here I'll leave you to guess

Both the shame and distress

Which the luckless retainers now plainly express,
As they gaze on their lady's corpse (wanting a head !)
And then reckon the list of their wounded and dead.
They're o'ercome with emotion, fear-stricken and awed ;
What account can they render for this to their lord ?
They've abandoned their mistress, they've let her be
slain,

And they feel explanations will prove but in vain ;
Then, their foe was but one single swordsman, and he,
To their rage and chagrin, has retreated scot-free !
Matters clearly have come to a desperate pass ;
So they raise up the litter (now lighter, alas !
Than it was when they started at noontide to-day)
And, with sighs of dejection and looks of dismay,
To the dark-frowning castle they take their sad way ;
And I think, if I read their blank faces aright,
There'll be cases of *seppuku** happen to night !

Once again the scene changes :—we plainly descry
'Tis the opposite side of the river—our eye
Merely rests on a bank built to keep off the flood,
While beneath it strong timbers project from the mud.
Ah, look there ! from the water, all dripping and dank,
There emerges a form, which crawls up the steep bank !

* *Seppuku*, the Japanese rendering of the sound of the two Chinese characters used in writing to denote the word *hara-kiri*, or suicide by disembowelment.

'Tis the form of a *man*—but so dreadful a sight
That you 'd almost believe him some foul river sprite !
In his mouth is a drawn sword,—and see ! just beneath,
From its long raven tresses fast clutch'd 'twixt his teeth,
With its features all writhed and distorted with dread
As when hewn from the trunk, hangs a *fresh-severed head* !
Look ! he reels and he staggers, he hardly can stand,
'Tis a wonder he 's ever got safely to land ;
For, between his long swim, and his recent hard bout,
Mr. Kwansuké 's undoubtedly wholly ' played out ' !
Down he sinks on the ground—then he struggles to rise
On his knees—with his hand wipes the spray from his
eyes—
Lastly, sits himself down to examine his prize.

I don't know if your skill, reader, e'er you 've essayed
At a game that 's called ' poker ' (extensively played
In the ' States ')—if you *have*, you 've most probably seen
And remarked the queer change that comes o'er a man's
mien,
When he 's drawn a fifth card which is not worth a rush,
And which leaves him with what 's styled ' a darn'd busted
flush ' !
Just conceive, now, the look that his face would display
If a pool of a million gold dollars then lay
On a table before him,—next try, if you can,
To intensify *ten times* the look of that man ;—
Well, you 've now got an inkling, from all I have said,
Of the glance of wild agony, horror, and dread
That comes o'er Kwansuké's face as he stares at the
head !

Now I trust, for humanity's sake, that just here
There are none too hard-hearted to squeeze out a tear,

Yes, a salt tear of sympathy pure and unfeign'd,
O'er the 'crushing bad luck' that our hero's sustained!

First, the poor fellow's lain

Half the day on the plain,

At the cost of much sorrow and anguish and pain,
Sadly tortured with frost-bitten hands, ears, and feet,
And with nothing to drink, nor a morsel to eat;—
He's imperilled his life, too, in battle's fierce shock,
And his head shows the traces of thump and of knock
Dealt by Kaga's retainers who, void of compassion,
Have abused their advantage in barbarous fashion;—
Then he's, thirdly, been duck'd in the river so cold;—
And to find—after all—that he's only been '*sold*'!
That Dame Fortune, who loves such vagaries to play,
Having led him a dance, has then stoop'd to betray;
For she's mockingly thrown to poor Kwansuké, instead
Of the prize that he's hoped for, *a different head*!
'Tis enough to drive frantic the veriest saint!

And I won't try the task of attempting to paint

His expression so black,

As he hurls the head back

In the dark swollen river that rushes beneath:

Next he wraps up his sword (being *minus* its sheath)

In a blue cotton kerchief he draws from his breast,

And so leaves the sad scene with a visage depress'd;

While with deep lamentation he groans and he whines

O'er the thought of enduring such 'awful hard lines'!

Chang'd again is the scene:—Now before us there lies
A poor fisherman's hut of diminutive size—

It is ev'ning,—and there

Are a jovial pair—

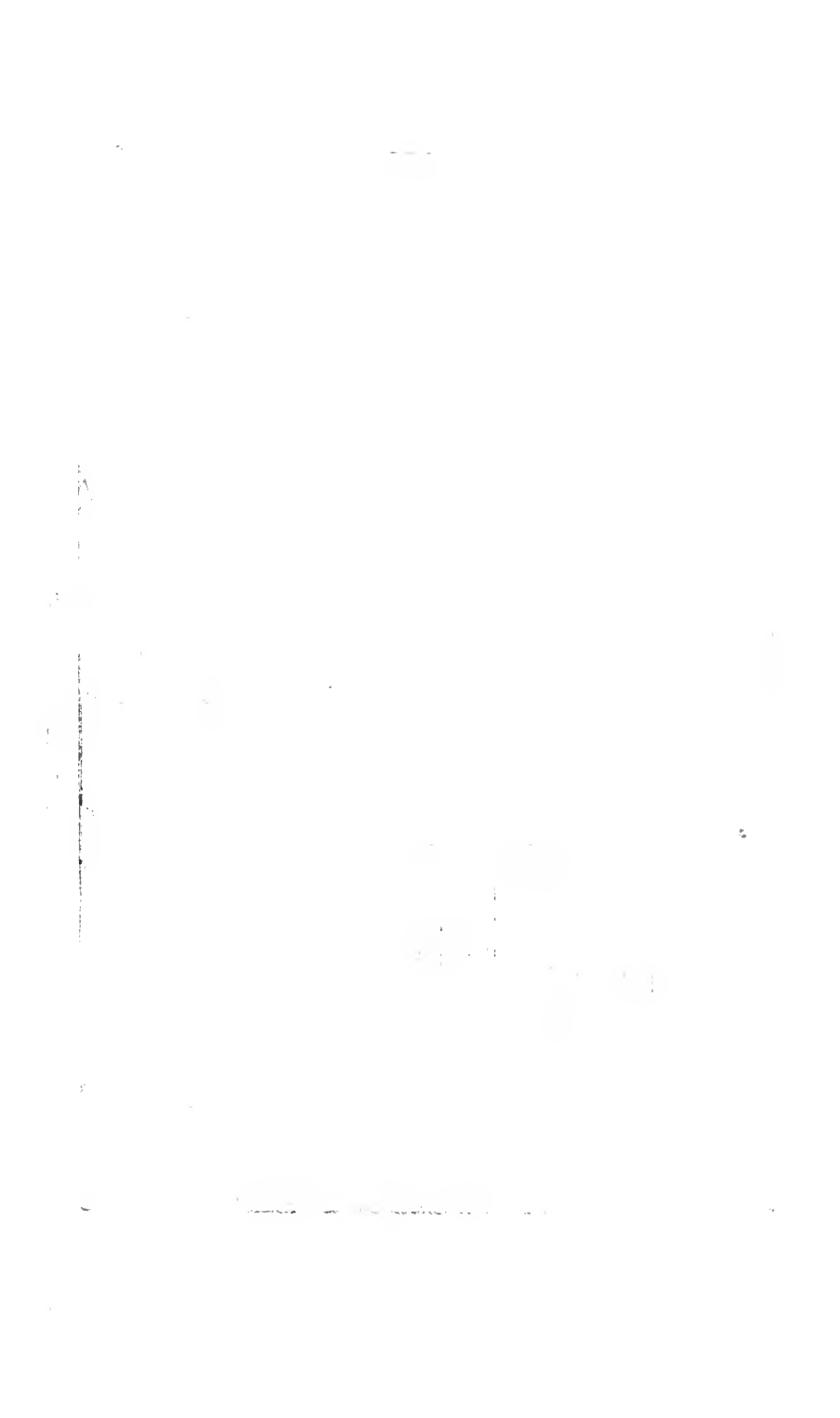
This a man, that a damsel remarkably fair—
Who are just sitting down with a keen hungry air
 To their frugal repast ;
 (They don't know 'tis the last
That as brother and sister together they 'll share !)
Well, to cut matters short, I will here tell you plain
That this hut is the place where young Kwansuké has
 lain
Safely hid, since his fruitless attack on the train ;
 And his sister so keen
 For his comfort has been,
As to share his long exile, and rule his *cuisine* !
How they ply their long chopsticks ! How deftly the fish
And the *daikon's** transferred to their mouths from the
 dish !
How they go for their *saké* !—but ah ! long before
They have ended their meal, comes a bang at the door,
And in walks an intruder, who startles them sore ;—
(Like that Captain Miles Standish, unbidden who came
To the gay marriage-feast of his Puritan 'flame' !)
Down he flings his large hat, down his mantle does
 throw—
'Tis our hero's old master, the agèd *karô* !
With a kind salutation, he squats on the mat,
And, without more preamble, commences to chat.

“On a night cold and drear,
 In December last year,
When returning from town, and when fast drawing near
To the castle, my foot, 'neath the snow on the ground,
Struck an object — I stooped, and this scabbard I
 found : ”—

* *Daikon*, the long Japanese radish.



THE COUNCILLOR'S VISIT.



(He produces it)—“Fancy, again, my surprise,
When the badge of my household thereon met my
eyes !

I remember'd well, Kwansuké, that lately to *you*
I'd presented that scabbard, with sword in it too ;
How it came to be lost, how it chanced that it lay
In the snow, I knew not—so continued my way.

At the castle that night

There was grief and affright ;
And I learn'd, by degrees, the whole tale of the fight
Which resulted, alas ! in the terrible death
Of her ladyship—well, I of course held my breath
As regards the sword-scabbard, nor stoop'd to betray
My suspicions—but, Kwansuké, be candid, and say
Was it *you* took the head off poor Lady O Tei ? ”

Thus adjur'd, our young hero does plainly declare
All the facts, gentle reader, of which you're aware ;
How, conceal'd 'neath the hedge, he had clearly o'er-
heard

Of the Councillor's tirade each separate word ;
How his blood it did boil, and his brain it did burn ;
How he thought to his patron he'd do a good turn,
By depriving the demon O Hidé of life ;
How he only found out at the *end* of the strife
That he'd failed in his scheme (to his infinite woe)
And 'instead of the pigeon had slaughter'd the crow' !
—Here, in proof of his tale, he produces the blade,
Which the sheath fits exactly, as though for it made.
—“ I assure you, kind master, I frequently since
Have endeavoured to whisper the ear of our prince ;
Being fully resolv'd, having made a ' clean breast,'
And my fatal mistake having bravely confess'd,

To commit *hara-kiri*, and die like a man,
To proclaim my devotion to him and my clan !
But no chance was forthcoming — Fate would not
 accord
That poor Kwansuké should e'er meet with Kaga's
 proud lord ;
Yet that object's attain'd, now I 've met, Sir, with
 you ;
And there rests only *one* thing for Kwansuké to do ! ”
 Cries the Councillor, “ Nay !
 I beseech you to stay
Your mad scheme, and just listen to what I shall say :
You must know, then, our lord took it into his brain
’Twas through Hidé’s foul plots that his lady was
 slain ;
All the love that, while living, to her he ’d denied
Seem’d again to revive when he learn’d how she died ;
He’s a man of strong impulse, as doubtless you know,
Quick he flung off the glamour that blinded him so,
Gave O Hidé the sack, cast her off from his gate,
And then turn’d his attention to matters of state ;
What a weeding took place ! evil councillors went,
Bad officials were all to the right-about sent—
Bag and baggage he clear’d ’em out, every one,
And has proved himself truly his good father’s son !
And this grand reformation, I take it, is due—
Indirectly, of course—Mr. Kwansuké, to *you* !
Pray don’t think, then, of suicide—you’re not betrayed—
But re-enter my service ; your fortune is made ! ”

With a sorrowful sigh,
And a glance in his eye
That bespeaks resolution, does Kwansuké reply,—

“What! you ask me to live—*me*, a true *samurai*!
When the only resource that’s yet left me’s to die!
You invite *me* to live—you beseech *me* to stay—
When ’twas *I* struck the blow that slew Lady O Tei!
I rejoice at the indirect fruits of my work;
For *myself*, though—stand by! you *shall* yield me that
dirk!”

All is o’er!—with his life’s blood the ill-fated man
Has now sealed his devotion to chief and to clan!

MORAL.

I.

Married men! I would first give a caution to you:—
Pay your wives that devotion that’s rightly their due;
And don’t wander o’ nights, nor be tempted to roam,
But as soon as it’s sunset go soberly home!

II.

Married ladies! if e’re you’re inclined to be gay,
Think, oh! think of the fate of poor Lady O Tei!

III.

Lovely damsels ! be warned by this drama so tragic :—
Learn that beauty ne'er needs the assistance of magic
To ensnare willing victims—no more potent wile
Do I know, than the charm of a fair maiden's smile !

IV.

Last of all, to young bachelors here I would speak :—
Don't be too fond of ' larking,' of jcke, or of freak ;
Don't disturb honest folks when they 're snugly abed,
And take care that you don't lose your *heart* or your
head !



LADY KOKONUYÉ.

WHETHER the fair damsel who is the heroine of the following tale ever really existed is a question open to considerable doubt. That there was, however, once upon a time a nobleman named Amako, and that his retainers earned for themselves a high reputation for their devotion and fidelity to his service, is sufficiently proved by Japanese historical annals. But it is with the play and not with history that we have to deal; and as to the former a heroine is absolutely necessary, we can hardly do better than refrain from too close inquiry, contenting ourselves instead with what is told us about her in the drama alone.

Lady Kokonagé;

A Fragment from the Japanese play of "Amako Jiu-yu-shi" ("The Ten Valiant Retainers of Amako"), as performed at the Haruki-machi Theatre, Hongô, Tôkiô, in January, 1878.

IN the province of Idzumo, west of Japan,
 'Midst as lovely a landscape as e'er you might
 scan,

Yoshihisa, the lord of an ample domain,
 O'er the castle of Tomita blithely does reign;
 Of the proud house of Amako chieftain is he,
 And his fathers were nobles of lofty degree.

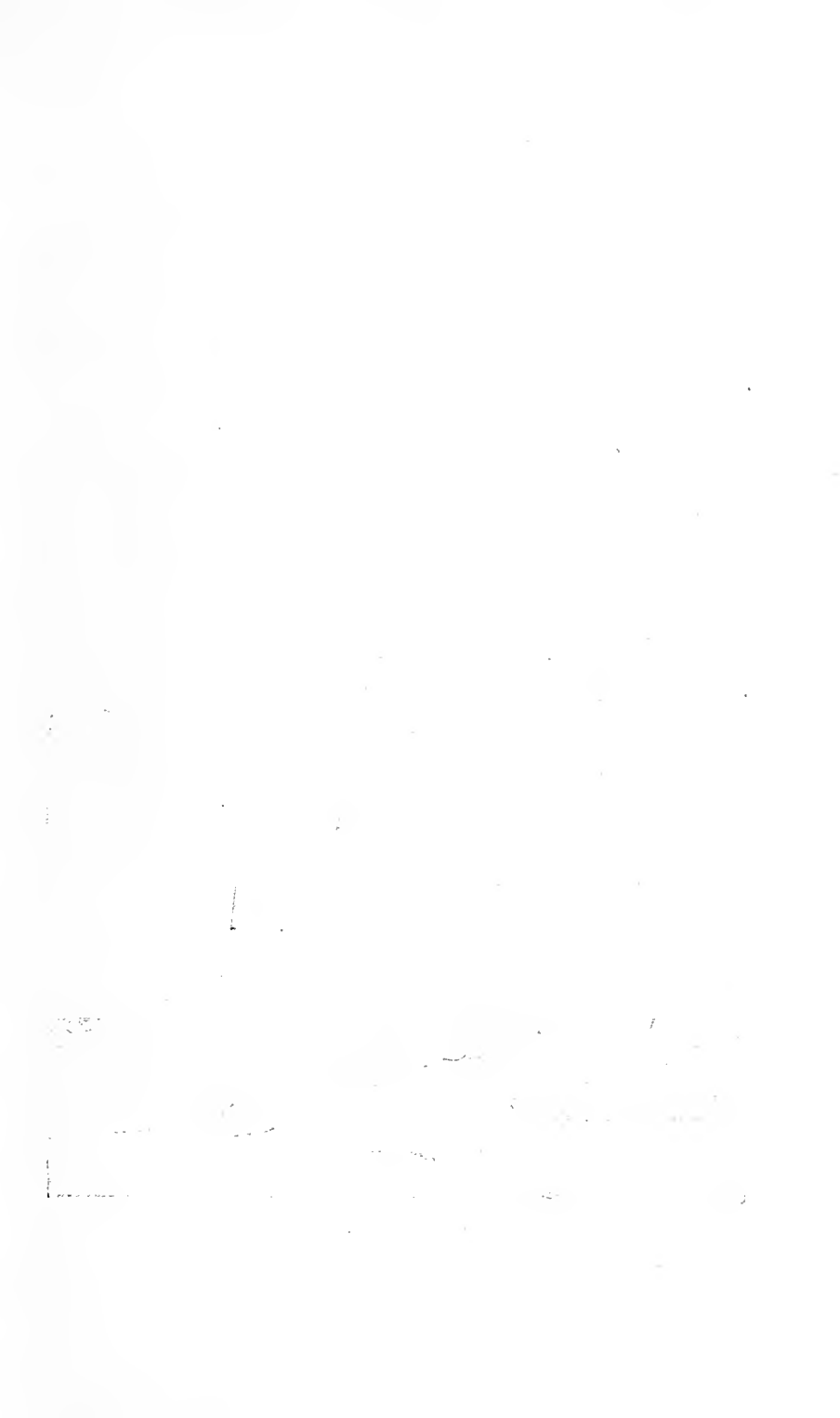
Words would fail to narrate
 All his pomp and his state,
 Or his riches and splendour in full to relate;
 So the news must suffice,
 That of ev'rything nice

That this world can afford he has got a good slice!
 He's a wife, too, as fair as could possibly be,
 Whom he loves as becomes a devoted *mari*;
 He's an aged mamma (a most sanctified nun),
 And one daughter—alas! he's not blessed with a son;

On behalf of that daughter I'd venture to claim
 Your attention—my title will give you her name ;
 Stay, I'll just introduce you, in drawing-room style—
 "Kokonoyé—my reader!"—(a curtsy, and smile).

Fair Tokiwa's undying name
 Is writ on Hist'ry's page,
 Her matchless charms have left their fame
 To each succeeding age ;
 She moved the Tyrant's heart of steel
 By simple loveliness ;
 E'en Kiyomori's breast could feel
 For Beauty in distress : *
 Yet, beside Kokonoyé, it's nought of affront
 To assert that e'en Tokiwa's 'out of the hunt' !
 Yes, my heroine's charming!—her figure so trim
 As the willow tree's bough is as graceful and slim ;
 Her complexion's as white as is Fuji's hoar peak
 'Neath the snows of midwinter—like damask her cheek—
 With a dear little nose,
 And two eyes black as sloes,
 And a pair of ripe lips which, when parted, disclose
 Pearly teeth—her fine eyebrows obliquely are set,
 (In Japan that's a beauty)—her hair's dark as jet,
 And is coiled in thick masses on top of her pate,
 In a wonderful *chignon* as big as a plate :—
 (There are *eight* styles of *chignon*, just here I may tell
 My fair readers, as known to the Japanese *belle*).

* Alluding to an incident in Japanese history. Tokiwa, a young peasant-girl of surpassing beauty, was the concubine of Minamoto no Yoshitomo, and when the latter's family was almost annihilated in 1159 by Kiyomori, chief of the rival clan of Taira, she, by her loveliness, so moved the heart of the conqueror that he consented to spare the lives of her three sons.





LADY KOKONUYÉ.

Then, to heighten the beauty bestowed on the part
Of kind Nature, she 's called in th' assistance of Art,
For rice-powder to render more dazlingly fair
Her face, hands, neck, and chin—cherry oil for her
hair—

Just a *souçon* of rouge to embellish her lip—
And a host of cosmetics my mem'ry that slip:—
To complete the fair picture of bright loveliness,
Add to all this the charm of her elegant dress :

Satin, crape, and brocade

Here contribute their aid

For the long flowing garments in which she 's arrayed,
Which hang loose from her shoulders, in fanciful fold,
All embroidered with storks and plum-blossoms in
gold ;

Next, a broad velvet girdle encircles her waist,
Tied behind in a huge bow—her feet are encased
In small spotless white stockings, which timidly peep
From beneath her red *jupon's* elaborate sweep ;
Add a hair-pin of tortoise-shell, dainty to see ;
On her brow place a circlet of gilt filigree ;—
There, in all the warm glow of her beauty, see shine
Kokonoyé, sole heiress of Amako's line !

Now of course you 'll agree,

I feel certain, with me,

When a damsel 's as lovely as lovely can be,
When her face is as fair as a face e'er has been,
And her figure 's as graceful as ever was seen,
Above all, when the damsel 's but ' sweet seventeen,'
And her young male acquaintances ardent and keen,

In no matter what land,

It to reason must stand

There 'll be plenty of lovers to strive for her hand ;--

When it's known, furthermore, that her father's possess'd

Of the wealth of this world, and has plainly express'd

His intention, when'er his fair daughter shall wed,

To bestow more than blessings alone on her head,—

It may fairly be deemed that in trying to win

Her affections, *some* swains have an eye to the 'tin'!

—Well, from both of the causes I've mentioned above,

Crowds of suitors contend for my heroine's love;

Some are snared by *her* eyes—some (more numerous yet)

Font la cour aux beaux yeux de sa jolie casette!

Shikanosuké's her choice;—no proud *daimiô* he,

Hatamoto, or *kugé** of lofty degree—

No, his *mibun*† is humble,—this favoured young man

Is a vassal, in fact, of the Tomita clan:

Yet he's gentle by birth—by his lord trusted well—

And his feats and accomplishments scarce can I tell;

He can beat any man

Through the whole of Japan

At composing a verse to inscribe on a fan,—

(That's a great test of scholarship, doubtless you know)—

Then at sword-play, spear-practice, or drawing the bow,

Or at backing a steed, I may truthfully state,

He can match any youth of his own size and weight;

He has ne'er shunn'd a foe, nor sent friend to the wall—

He can drink like a *shôjô* ‡—at feast or in brawl

* *Hatamoto*, petty nobles of the old Shôgunate; *kugé*, Court nobles of Kiôto (the Mikado's Court), as opposed to the *daimiô* or territorial nobles.

† *Mibun*, status, position in life.

‡ *Shôjô*, fabulous creatures, of human shape, with long red hair; said to be exceedingly fond of liquor.

He is equally ready his fortune to try—
And his comrades all vote him a true *samurai* !
He's a ' rising young man,' no one dares to dispute,
And the fair Kokonoyé has smiled on his suit !

Full oft our lovers now explore
The castle's farthest bounds,
Together traverse o'er and o'er
Its wooded pleasure-grounds ;
Oft ling'ring where some friendly bough
Conceals from others' view,
They breathe once more the tender vow,
And plight their troth anew ;
And oft affect, while side by side
Along the moat they stray,
To watch the giant *koi** glide
Right leisurely away :—

Yes, it's all very fine for these two, I declare ;
But just think of the *other* swains, left in despair !—
You may guess that some suitors were madly enraged
When they learned Kokonoyé was really ' engaged ' ;
Some, they stormed and they raved, in a fume and a
fret ;
Others dubbed her a ' jilt,' and a ' heartless coquette ' ;
And some gloomily swore they 'd commit suicide—
But 'tis needless to say *that* resource they ne'er
tried,
For, ere long, Time had healed their sore-wounded
affection,
And they turn'd their *amours* in some other direction !

* *Koi*, large fish, with which the ponds in Japanese pleasure-grounds are usually stocked. They often grow to an enormous size.

Terutsura alone (our lord's Councillor he)
 To accept his rebuff could not,—*would* not agree ;
 And he swore, which was coming it rather too
 strong,
 He'd 'get even' with young Shikanosuké ere long.

As 'the course of true love never smoothly did run,'
 Here our fond couple's troubles have quickly begun,
 And the *surgit amari*, commencement of woe,
 Is all caused by the schemes of the wicked *karô* ;—
 First he cunningly tries,
 By a tissue of lies,
 Shikanosuké to lower in Amako's eyes ;
 And, that done, he contrives (this unprincipled man !)
 That the youth shall be outlawed, and banished the
 clan ;
 He himself bears the sentence, and mockingly gloats
 O'er his victim's hard fate—Shikanosuké scarce notes
 What he hears, but in voice unconcernèd does say,
 "I expected as much—I will clear out to-day !" —
 —It would seem that our hero's already aware
 Of his foe, and has managed his own counter-snare ;
 Has committed, in fact, an *intentional* slip
 (Which the Councillor takes as a negligent trip)
 To ensure his dismissal, and leave himself free
 To encompass the fall of his foeman, while *he*
 O'er his fancied success is exulting with glee.
 Terutsura stalks out :—there's a bang at the door,
 Then a shuffle of feet,—some half-dozen or more
 Of our hero's young chums rush excitedly in,
 And pour forth their resentment with clamorous
 din—

"Shikanosuké, old man ! we 're in terrible grief :
 At the thought of your exile ; 'tis past all belief
 That that rascally Councillor e'er should have dared
 Thus to do you a wrong—never mind, we 're pre-
 pared
 Here to take our own lives, and thus plainly to
 show
 How indignant we feel 'gainst that scoundrel *karô* ! "

No further words they idly waste,
 But range them in a row ;
 Down goes each mantle, doffed in haste,
 Their vests they open throw ;
 Each steels his heart
 To act his part,
 Out comes each gleaming dirk ;
 They only wait
 The signal, straight
 To start their awful work ;—
 One moment more,
 'Twill all be o'er
 With each young heart so bold,—
 When, loud and stern, behind the door,
 A solemn voice cries " Hold ! "

With a start ev'ry man turns around, and descries
 An old priest, with bald pate and benevolent eyes !
 (He 's the priest of the temple, I here may explain,
 'Neath whose roof Shikanosuké his lodging has
 ta'en.)

" Well, you *are* a nice lot," cries this worthy, " to try
 And defile my new mats in your hurry to die !
 Don't you think 'twould be better by far to remain
 In the land of the living ?—What have you to gain

By despatching yourselves?—Face your ills with a smile,
And don't flee from bad luck in such cowardly style!"

"Kind comrades all!"—our hero cries,
"This monk the truth has said;
His counsel it is wondrous wise—
A thought comes in my head—
'Twere fitter, surely, that our *foe*,
Not *we*, our blows should feel;
Let's swear to teach yon proud *karô*
The temper of our steel!"

Suiting action to word, he takes paper and pen,
Writes a long form of oath, cons it over, and then
Reads it out to the rest—
There it's plainly expressed
That each man of the band will endeavour his best
To effect their false enemy's downfall and shame—
To this scroll, one by one, each affixes his name,
And, that done, with his knife gives a resolute score
To his left hand's fourth finger, and seals with his
gore.

—You may guess that their chieftain shows stern discontent

When he gets nine petitions, each asking consent
For the writer, his vassal, his service to quit
On some pretext 'so urgent it cannot admit
Of delay'; — though chagrined, he perforce must
agree;

"Shikanosuké's to blame for *this* move," mutters
he,

"If they wish it, however, I'll let them go free;"—

So he yields—that same ev'ning, when night's growing
late,

Ten retainers file out through the ponderous gate,
And at daybreak ten *rônin*,* concealed on the hill
In the rear of the castle, lurk watchful and still!

And how does Kokonoyé take

Her lover's evil plight?

Poor girl! her heart is like to break,

She sobs from morn till night;

With hair dishevelled—swollen eyes—

And cheeks with tear-drops wet—

In truth, you 'd hardly recognize

Our former bright coquette!

While her lover's a *rônin*, her father, beguiled

By the wily *karô*, has now suddenly smiled

On the suit that that hypocrite dares to prefer

To *herself*, Shikanosuké's betrothed—yes, to *her*!

'Out of sight, out of mind,' says the proverb, you know;

Now his rival is absent, he thinks he's a 'show'

To go courting himself, for her favour to plead,—

With her sire on his side, he's convinced he'll succeed;—

But there's yet one more proverb that's equally clear,

Which remarks—'Lost to sight, yet to memory dear';

And the Councillor finds, to his rage and his shame,

That he *can't* shake her trust in her victimized 'flame'!

Then, his temper to try,

And his threats to defy,

Kokonoyé's backed up by a trusty ally—

* *Rônin*, the name given to a man who, for some offence, has been dismissed from the service of his feudal lord, or who, in some cases, has voluntarily gone into exile.

'Tis her grandma, the nun, who thus 'comes to the fore,'

For she hates Terutsura like poison—and more !
On the night Shikanosuké went forth in disgrace,
This benevolent dame in his pocket did place
A full purse,—and besides, as a sorrowful treat,
She contrived that the lovers a last time should meet !
Shikanosuké was agonized, crazy with grief—
Kokonoyé in torrents of tears found relief—
Scarce a word could they utter, yet amply expressed
Were the feelings that filled each disconsolate breast !
That last interview's memories fully avail
To ensure a deaf ear to the Councillor's tale ;
Kokonoyé's relentless, with scorn in her eyes
She repels his advances, and angrily cries,

“ She 'd rather roam the mountains cold
By Shikanosuké's side,
Than share a throne of gems and gold
As Terutsura's bride ! ”

Madam Seigan, the nun, as I've mentioned before,
Takes her grand-daughter's part, and then quickly wins
o'er

Lady Yayé, our heroine's mother, to sign
A defensive alliance ;—the ladies combine,—

All their influence use

The *karô* to abuse,—

And ere long their tormentor quite shakes in his
shoes ;

For if Tomita's lord should e'er chance to suspect
His retainer's vile schemes, or his motives detect,
Then 'adieu' to ambition, wealth, rank he must say,—
'Twill, in fact, be a case of the *oni** to pay !

* *Oni*, devil, or demon.

So he sits himself down
With a curse and a frown,
Puts his conjuring cap on, and cudgels his brains
To devise some fresh plan—and not long he remains ;
For there 's *someone* we know is uncommonly quick
To assist those whose conscience at nothing will stick !
Up he springs in delight—
“ That 's the ticket ! all right !
I 'll arrange the whole matter this very same night ;—
Ay ! when *he's* safe removed, I 'll soon manage the
crew
Of old hags,—and then, ho ! my proud beauty, for
you ! ”
So he writes a long letter, and seals it with care,
Calls a page, gives him secret commands to beware
That no soul shall the errand or sender divine,
Packs him off, and then seats himself calmly to dine ;
—And the strangest of all strange events, I 'll allow,
Is the fact that this rascal 's not choked by his 'chow' !

Throughout the spacious castle hall
Reign fear and consternation ;
The vassals whisper, beck, and call
In gloomy perturbation ;
And Yoshihisa ill conceals
His manifest vexation,
While Terutsura's face reveals
A smile of exultation !
“ Room ! Room ! for the Envoy ! ”—the vassals divide
In two ranks — down the hall comes, with leisurely
stride,

Ura Hiôbu-no-jô, stately, tall and refined,
 With his silk *naga-bakama** trailing behind,—
 Squats in front of the dais with dignity proud,
 Draws a scroll from his bosom, and reads it aloud :—

“ You, Yoshihisa, of the line
 Of Amako ”—(’tis writ)

“ Of Tomita, in Idzumo,

The present lord, to wit !—

WHEREAS, Our ears have lately heard

Strange tales of grievance spoke,

And high and low have complaints preferred

Against your cruel yoke,—

NOW THEREFORE, it is Our command

You presently be set

Within a cage, bound foot and hand,

And covered with a net,

And to Our capital be sent,

Where we shall then decide

For you a fitting punishment,

All as the laws provide ! ”—

With a groan Yoshihisa falls forward, as flat

As a pancake, and presses his face to the mat ;

While his vassals dismayed, with alarm in their eyes,

Clearly show that the news takes them quite by surprise.

What !—their lord, so benevolent, kindly, and just,

To be trussed like a fowl, and in prison be thrust !

It’s preposterous ! — someone has slandered him !—
 here

The cry “ Room for the Envoy ! ” again greets their
 ear,—

* *Naga-bakama*, long nether garments, trailing behind the feet for a yard or more, worn with the old court costume.



THE FALSE ENVOY.

Down they bow to the floor—they can't see, they don't
think

That that Envoy's left eye gives a sinister wink
(Which some secret arrangement right plainly reveals)
As he passes the spot where the Councillor kneels !

Oh ! a dreary sight is seen next morn,

When before the Castle gate

The retainers sad, with looks forlorn,

For their lord's departure wait !

Terutsura alone seems inclined to be gay,—

He has just seen the Envoy again on his way,

And he now hastens on, with remarkable zeal,

Yoshihisa's departure—not seeming to feel

Any sorrow or grief,

He just bundles his chief

(Who's half stupefied still with dismay and affright)

In the net-covered litter,* and shuts him in tight,—

Quickly starts him away, and then, pausing awhile

As the captive's borne off, gives a chuckle and smile,

And so turns on his heel with a satisfied smirk,

Like a man who's accomplished some arduous work ;

“ That was splendidly done,” mutters he,—“ and this
hour

Sees the proud Kokonoyé at last in my power ! ”

Were you ever ‘ up-country,’ kind reader ? — While
there

You have probably noticed the *kago*—a chair

Made of slender bamboos, which is slung from a strong

Wooden pole, and so borne by two coolies along—

* When a Japanese noble was to be conveyed to any place under guard, a net, usually of dark-green silk, was thrown over the *norimono* or litter in which he was borne.

'Tis a picturesque kind of conveyance—but say,
Did you ever yet *try* one, and ride a short way?

If you did, I've no doubt

That you quickly jumped out,

And with half-broken vertebræ, quite benumbed shin,
Roundly cursed your own folly that e'er you got in!

And you felt, I'll be bound, in your tortured condition,

'Twas an engine quite worthy the old Inquisition!

Torquemada, I'll swear,

Had it chanced that he e'er

Clapped his eyes on this most diabolical chair,

Would his pincers, racks, pulleys, and all have displaced,

And to each of his victims have given a taste

Of the *kago*, instead!

To begin with, your head

Is so bumped 'gainst the pole that you're stunned and half-dead;

Then your neck is all twisted awry, and your feet

Go to sleep, and your chin and your knees almost meet;

And you writhe and you turn, in your efforts to ease

Your poor bones, and so doing, your coolies displease,—

Till they audibly growl, and then angrily swear

At the 'squirms' and the twists of their troublesome 'fare'!

But conceive, now, what agony yet you'd endure

If your limbs were bound tightly!—that done, I am sure

Yoshihisa's condition will wring from your breast

A deep sigh—he's not happy, that must be confessed.

About a *ri**
They've gone, when he
Is suddenly aware
Of an angry shout,
And a noise and rout
Beside his prison chair;
'Tis a beggar bold,
Who has plainly strolled
For miles the road along,
Now makes essay
To force his way

Right in amongst the throng,
And before the stern guards can arrest him, he's seen
At the side of the litter, and in through the screen
Quickly pops a short dirk!—then commences a fray,—
“Cut him down!”—“Knock him over!”—they angrily
say,
As they rush on him fiercely—what's this! from
beneath
His straw coat a long sword flashes out from its
sheath!
How he slashes and thrusts!—but a moment, no more,
And the guards take to flight, and the combat is o'er,—
Sauve qui peut—off they scamper—behind, in full chase,
Runs the beggar, intent upon ‘forcing the pace’!

Yoshihisa, of course, now a weapon he's got,
Cuts asunder his bonds, and is out like a shot;
While he stands, in surprise
At his freedom, his eyes
Note a strange-looking form from a thicket arise:—

* A Japanese measure of length, equal to about $2\frac{1}{2}$ English miles.

Is 't a robber?—yet, surely that visage we know,—
 'Tis the former Court Envoy, the Hiôbu-no-jô!
 Down he drops on his knees at the *daimiô's* feet,
 And with tears in his eyes does for pardon entreat:
 What! for pardon?—yes, quickly the scheme he does
 tell—

How the *soi-disant* Envoy was nought but a 'sell'—
 How the wicked *karô* had induced him to play
 The false *rôle*, with intent the poor lord to betray—
 How, the hoax at an end, to his horror and grief
 He has learned Yoshihisa's his brother's old chief,
 (For his brother, it seems, of the *rônin* is one)—
 How he longs to amend all the mischief he's done;
 And, to prove his contrition, his crimes to repair,
 He now offers to guide my lord Amako where
 He may meet with safe shelter and suitable fare;—
 Yoshihisa accepts, with delight in his heart,
 So the robber and noble together depart.

But while all this is passing, our heroine bold
 Has resolved to escape from the Councillor's hold;
 Her dislike's changed to horror, for rightly she deems
 She herself is the object of all his vile schemes.
 Oh! for brave Shikanosuké to guard her from ills!
 Shikanosuké? alas! he's now roaming the hills—

Ha! a thought strikes her brain—

Could *she* manage to gain

That same hill, she may hope safely hid to remain
 Till he once more shall meet her—he's not far
 away:—

(How she knows *that*, fair reader, 'tis not mine to
 say;

But this much I may hint, that some fond *billet-doux*
 May *perhaps* have assured her her lover is true!)



IN AMBUSH.

Quickly thought, quickly done—
To her mother she 's run,
Has confided her hopes, and the morrow's bright sun
Sees her far from the castle, her journey begun :—
Let us hope she 'll succeed in her desperate plan,
Now, Diogenes-like, she 's ' in search of a man ' !

On a lone, dark plain,
'Mid the sleet and rain,
 Beneath yon sombre tree,
See ! sword in hand
The *rônin* stand
 By *one*—by *two*—by *three* ;
By *four*—by *five*,
They still arrive,
 And silently they wait,
Till soon they spy
Yet more draw nigh,
 By *six*—by *seven*—by *eight* ;
Their number 's told—
We plain behold
Our half-score ' valiant men,'—
Ay, there they stand,
That outlawed band,
 By *nine* and eke by *ten* !
'Tis a terrible sight, for we clearly can see
That there 's murder, for certain, upon the *tapis* !
—Hark, a step !—quick they dodge 'neath the dark leafy
 screen,
Whence they get a good view, yet themselves are un-
 seen :

And two wayfarers, weary, and cold, and wet through,
 All be-splashed and be-mired, slowly come into view ;
 Why, who's this ?—mark that face !—no, it never can
 be—

Yet it *is*—Kokonoyé !—alas, it is she !
 Poor, forlorn little damsel !—is *this*, then, the end
 Unto which all her fond dreams of happiness tend ?—
 Overcome by fatigue, with a gasp and a groan
 Down she sinks in the mire, and lies still as a
 stone ;

While her nurse (her companion) in grief and despair
 Falls to wringing her hands and to tearing her hair !
 —Is there none to give aid ?—through the fast-pouring
 rain

She perceives in the distance a gentleman's train.
 Loud she calls for assistance—they quickly arrive,
 At the moment our heroine seems to revive ;

But alas ! a worse woe

Now awaits her—for lo !

In the litter there sits the inhuman *karô* !

'Tis the *Councillor's* voice that in loud mocking strain
 Cries : “ Aha ! my fair truant !—I've caught you
 again ! ”

—And our heroine finds, to her grief and her ire,
 She's but ‘ out of the frying-pan into the fire ’ !

The nurse in abject fear does whine ;

Her charge erect remains—

The proud old blood of all her line

Now boils within her veins—

Her eyes fixed sternly on her foe's,

(Who half-abashed does pause)

With hand that now no falt'ring knows

Her dagger keen she draws—

And she 'll *use* it, be sure, in a way he can feel,
For the Amako race were aye prone to draw steel !
Undecided he halts—when a crash and a rout
Greet his ear, and a voice cries with menacing
shout,

“Thou traitor, stand !—thy flight is flown !

Release my lady dear !—

Now, Terutsura, hold thine own,

For Shikanosuké's here !”—

Vain, vain his skill !—his weapon's aid

Can scarce avert his fate,

Ere the swing of our hero's practised blade

Descends upon his pate !

Down he goes, dead as mutton ! while loudly around

Do the clashing and din of hot combat resound ;

For the *rônin* rush in like wild tigers, and then

They make mincemeat, in short, of the Councillor's
men !

Shikanosuké alone takes no part in the fight—

He has something far better to do,—and he's right ;

Quick his left arm is placed

Round the slim willow-waist

Of his lady-love—backward he draws her in haste ;

They regard with indifference foemen and friend,

And they don't seem to care how the battle may
end—

What they say to each other, you e'en may suppose

For yourselves—I can't tell you, for nobody knows ;

Yet they *seem* to be anything rather than 'blue'—

But the curtain here falls, and they're hid from our
view !

L'ENVOYE TO THE READER.

“ I do not rhyme to that dull elf ”

(Sir Walter here I quote)

“ Who cannot image to himself ”

What I have failed to note ;—

How, of course, Shikanosuké it was who had freed
Yoshihisa, in moment of danger and need ;
How the latter, in gratitude, kindly did smile
On our fond pair, and blessed them in ‘ stage-father’s
style ;

How they all went their way ;

How, from that happy day,

Kokonoyé was never again known to stray
From her home, but looked after her *fil*s and *mari*
In a mode that was really quite touching to see ;
And how, *jure uxoris*, that gallant young man
In due space became chief of the Tomita clan ;
And how, e’en to this time, are their praises yet told ;—
Kokonoyé the fair—Shikanosuké the bold !

THE HAUNTED MANSION.

THE main facts of this terrible tragedy are, alas! but too true. It occurred during the spring of the year 1653, in the town mansion of one Awoyama Shuzen, an official of the then existing Police Bureau. This mansion is still standing in Tôkiô, and the fatal well also exists even at the present time; the ghost, however, has fortunately ceased to haunt the premises.

The Haunted Mansion ;

From the Original Japanese Play of "Banchô Sarayashiki," as Performed at the Shimabara Theatre, Tôkiô, in August, 1878.

SILENT it stands. No sound of voice
 Is heard within the door ;
 No tramp of steed, or armèd men,
 As in the days of yore ;
 The night-owl flaps his heavy wing
 Beneath the sombre trees,
 Unbarred the massive portals swing
 Before the ev'ning breeze.
 No gallant throng of vassals bold
 Is there, the eye to greet ;
 Closed are the windows once that looked
 Upon the busy street ;
 No warder now his vigil keeps,
 No watchman goes his round,
 Still as the tomb the mansion sleeps,
 Of life no sign, no sound !

Wouldst hear of those who erst did in it dwell?—
Then list, kind reader, while the tale I tell.

Years ago, in Japan, then, here let it be told,
There resided a nobleman, wealthy and bold;
Otogawa his surname; his Christian name—well,
I'm ashamed to confess that I simply can't tell;
But I hope the omission you'll pardon this time,
For these names do not always fit in with one's
rhyme.

—I may mention, too, here

It's perhaps rather queer

To be talking of *Christian* names, seeing 'tis clear
That the style of religion then commonly known
Was decidedly Buddhist or Shintô in tone;
(Though the Buddhists, to-day, are as poor as can
be—

'Disestablished,' you know, during '73.)—

Well, it chanced that this noble received one fine
day

From the Shôgun some curio (*what*, I can't say),
And was ordered to hold it in keeping discreet,
Till his lord should reclaim it, and give a receipt.
Now, Japan is a land, I am forced to reveal,
Where the robber right often doth 'break through and
steal';

To our noble's dismay,

He discovered one day

That his charge had ta'en wings, and had flown right
away,—

Nought remained save the casket that once it did fill,
'Twas a clear case of *box, et præterea nil!*

He fell into disgrace,
First at Court lost his place,
Then was turned out of doors with a very long face,
And was fain, in the end, for safe shelter to fly
To the house of one Sampei, a young *samurai* ;
Here he lay in concealment to cover his shame,
And was joined by his wife—Hanazono her name,—
While his vassals of course quickly melted away,
As the snow disappears 'neath the sun's scorching
ray.
There was one of his clients was mightily glad
At the thought that his chieftain had 'gone to the
bad';
For this rogue, Asayama, had long been in league
With confederates cunning and apt at intrigue,
With intent to secure what he swore was his due,
Viz.—his lord's high position, and revenue too ;
Now, his rival remov'd, he thought soon to rise
straight
From a mere *hatamoto* to *daimiô's* state.
At the time my tale opens, this villain decided
(Whom 'for short' we'll term Tessan) in Yedo re-
sided,
In the district called Banchô, — which, ev'ry one
knows,
Is chock-full of small *yashiki* * in rows upon rows,—
And there dwelt in his household a young serving-
maid
Called O Kiku, a beauty, yet modest and staid ;
She was bride to that Sampei I've mentioned above,
But by poverty forced from the side of her love.

* *Yashiki*, the fortified town mansions of the Japanese feudal nobles.

—All this ‘yarn,’ gentle reader, ’s no part of the
play,
But I’ve thought it as well just to put you *au fait*
With these facts, as the folks who’ve been introduced
here
In the subsequent drama may chance to appear;
Still, it’s time the performance were really begun—
Hark! the clapper sounds—‘Hats off!’—’tis said and
’tis done,
And the curtain now rises on Scene No. 1.

A charming garden greets our eye;—
Green bushes, blossoms gay—
Along a trellis, rear’d on high.
The slender creepers stray—
A rustic well—a garden stool—
Old stones, with lichens gray—
A tiny arbour, light and cool,
And screen’d from noontide ray—
“The very spot,” in glee you cry,
“To spend a summer’s day!”
’Tis a ‘Garden of Eden,’ you’d almost believe;
But appearances oftentimes are apt to deceive,—
And I’m certain you’d speedily alter your mind
Could you view the dark form in yon arbour reclined!

Dimly, through the lattice screen,
Robes of rich brocade are seen;
Faintly, too, the straining eye
Can a human shape descry;
There, in worst of angry moods,
Haughty Tessan sits and broods—

Broods o'er what?—o'er fancied wrong;
 Vowing vengeance, too, ere long!
 You'll remember O Kiku, this mansion who graced?—
 She was lovely as Venus, as Dian as chaste;
 But it seems, not to put too fine point on the matter,
 That her lord for some time past had cast sheep's eyes
 at her,
 And it chanced, this same day, to her dire consterna-
 tion,
 Of his love he had made a downright declaration!
 Now old Horace we know,
 Sang in years long ago
 (When at school I'd have quoted the lines *comme il*
 faut,
 But th' identical verse from my mem'ry now fades)
 Of the loves of great heroes for fair serving-maids;
 And, in fact, wrote a sonnet expressly to prove
 How one '*serva Briseis*' so managed to 'move
 By her snow-white complexion' her lord, as to catch
 Young Achilles himself—no indifferent match:—
 Whether Tessan read Latin or not's all the same,
 But it's clear he'd attempted to play a like game,
 And had 'taken a leaf from the book,' so to speak,
 Of his classical model, the 'swift-footed' Greek!
 With the *men*, though, all slight similarity ended;
 For Briseis was willing,—O Kiku, offended!
 (There, it's done!—I'm rejoiced to have 'scaped with
 whole skin,
 Having ventured on ice so unpleasantly thin!)

'When Poverty's gaunt form'—so runs
 The proverb—'to our eyes
 Appears upon the threshold, Love
 From out the window flies';—

But conceive, if you *can*, a more terrible state
Of affairs than when Love is succeeded by Hate !
After deep cogitation, proud Tessan has laid
His vile schemes to chastise the poor innocent
maid ;

Long ago, it would seem, so the story relates,
He had placed in her charge just a decade of plates
(He was great upon porcelain, this reprobate man)
Of the best willow-pattern that 's known in Japan ;
—(You right often, I ween

Gentle reader, have seen

Such a style,—the two islands—the waters between,
Straddled o'er by a bridge—in the distance a boat—
And the peach-tree and doves you 've not failed, too,
to note.)—

Of the ten, he 's contrived *one* to slyly regain,
And has then, in a manner quite barefaced and
plain,

Falsely taxed the poor girl, of her wits half-bereft,
With committing a downright and palpable theft ;
And he now sits in state, to determine the crime,
To accuse and condemn at the very same time !

And just beneath—accomplice meet !—

The vassal Chiuda stands :

With loins girt up, and sandalled feet,

To bear his lord's commands :

Macaulay's words come *à propos*

Of two such evil men—

Take down his 'Lays of Ancient Rome,'

Con o'er the leaves, and then

In that sad tale 'Virginia'

'Tis writ, you 'll plainly see,

That 'wheresoe'er such lord is found,

Such client still will be ' !

“Bring forth the culprit!”—from afar

A gruff response one hears;

In single file, a dismal train

Upon the stage appears:—

Goodness me! is that Kiku?—What awful hard lines
To be bound with that cord that her shoulders en-
twines!

And,—oh, horror!—her six vile attendants!—just see
How they gloat o’er their prey with unprincipled
glee!

’Pon my word, it would cause any Christian to swear,
Just to note the stout cudgels the ruffians bear!

Not regarding her woe,

On the ground just below

The small arbour, poor Kiku they cruelly throw;

And then Chiuda commences, in manner irate,

To inquire “what the dickens she’s done with that
plate?”

She don’t know that it’s lost;—she declares it’s all
right—

That the number’s complete—that she’s innocent
quite—

Whereupon Mr. Chiuda, without more ado,

Tips the wink to the rest of the villainous crew,

When each *brute* (for I certainly cannot say *man*)

Falls upon her and ‘lams’ her as hard as he can,

Showing no more compunction, nor heed to her pain,

Than as if he were thrashing a bushel of grain!

Thus admonished, she’s bidden anew to confess,—

Not a bit of it,—spite of her grief and distress,

She protests she’s no thief,—“if her lord be so
kind

As to count o’er the plates, the full number he’ll
find.”

Quickly Tessan hands over a box at his side,
(Made of rich gilded lacquer, with silken cord tied)—
“ There, then ; count for yourself !—Take them out one
by one,
Chiuda, slowly—’tis time that this nonsense were done ! ”

(Here in rapt expectation the audience waits,
While O Kiku begins telling over the plates.)

‘ *One!* ’ from Chiuda ;—from Kiku, ‘ *One!* ’—‘ *One!* ’
Tessan cries !

Down it goes on the ground ’fore the whole trio’s
eyes :

Number *two* next succeeds,—and then *three*,—and then
four,—

And so on till they’ve reckoned just five of them
more,—

“ That is *nine!* where’s the *tenth* one ? ” with agonised
cry

The poor creature exclaims ;—Chiuda raises on high
Th’ empty casket, reversed, and shouts fiercely, “ *Mo
nai!* ” *

And there passes o’er Tessan’s dark visage a smile,
As he hails the success of his infamous wile !

—Oh ! the scene that ensues !

How the wretches abuse

Their unfortunate victim !—completely they lose
All humanity, pity, and mercy as well,
And are changed into demons,—aye, demons of hell !
—I will spare you the details ;—suffice it to say
She is slung in mid air, in a barbarous way,

O'er the well, and the vassals, retiring, await
While their lord with his prey has a short *tête-à-tête* ;
'Tis a last chance he gives her—yet nought does he
 gain ;
She is true to her spouse, spite of torture and
 pain ;
“ Well then, die ! ” yells the monster ; “ by Sandzu’s*
 dark tide
Master Shampei’s arrival not long shall you bide ! ”—
 A flash !—a shriek prolonged and shrill !—
 Is *no one* nigh to aid ?—
Half-crazed with rage, he madly waves
 Aloft his trenchant blade—
A thud—an agonizing groan
 (Thank Heav’n ! ’tis only *one*)—
A rushing fall—a heavy plunge—
 The dreadful deed is done !

Mr. Chiuda commences with speed to efface
Of the horrible murder all record and trace ;
First he cleanses the sword-blade with dexterous hand,
Next he rinses the stones, and then splashes the sand,
Till there’s no tell-tale stain on the ground to be
 seen,
And the whole of the garden looks tidy and clean :
Stay ! a spot yet remains—how o’erlooked I can’t
 tell—
So his bucket once more clatters into the well.

(Hush ! what was that ?—from ’neath the ground
 Proceeds a stifled moan—

* The River Sandzu, the Buddhist Styx.

Then, louder still, a dismal sound,
A weird, sepulchral tone !
Hark ! a horrible voice on our tympanum grates—
'Tis the voice of a woman a-counting of plates !)

Haul, Chiuda, haul !—the bucket's raised ;—
A yell of wild despair !—
What ails him ?—is the fellow crazed ?—
Slight wonder if he were !—
See, see !—yon fearsome, awful sight !
A form with bosom bare—
With hands and face of ghastly white—
With dank, dishevelled hair—
With wide deep gash to view displayed
Across her throat so fair—
Oh, horror ! 'tis O Kiku's shade
That grins and gibbers there !
With a shriek of affright, and a wild frantic bound,
Mr. Chiuda, half-swooning, falls flat on the
ground !
When the ghost for awhile,
Looks around with a smile
Of revenge,—then, in true pyrotechnical style,
Disappears down the well (which yawns open to greet
her)
With a fizz, and a bang, and a smell of saltpetre !

“ I beseech you, my lord, not a moment to waste !
Pray retire to your other large mansion in haste !
This is haunted !—ah me !—oh, the ghost !—do not
wait ! ”

—Here a crowd of retainers file in through the
gate ;—



THE HAUNTED WELL.

“Well, I’m off,” cries his chieftain, “without more delay;”

“And I’ll go too,” says Chiuda;—“Excuse me, you’ll *stay*!

Keep your pecker up, man, and you can’t come to harm,

For you’ll find a stout stomach will act as a charm.”

Off he goes with his men;

Chiuda rises, and then

Gives a startled glance upwards—what is it he sees

That so soon brings him down again plump on his knees?

Look! he’s speechless with terror—as white as a post—

What’s that *form* floating o’er him?—“Help! *Murder!* the GHOST!”

—We can guess pretty well how the circumstance ends,

For a loud scream is heard as the curtain descends.

Mr. Chiuda has seemingly managed to ‘fix’

His assailant, and now is again at his tricks,

For in Scene No. 2

He’s revealed to our view,

Safe and sound—and in precious bad company, too;

For there stands at his side, in a narrow by-street,

Such a blackguardly ‘rough’ as you’d rather not meet

Of a dark wintry night, on a moorland remote,—

That’s to say, if you’ve any regard for your throat!

At a glance it’s apparent, and well understood

That the brace of sly rascals are up to no good;

From the words that we catch,
 'Twould appear that they're hatch-
 ing a plot that for cold-blooded slaughter might
 match

With the massacre which, so historians say,
 Was enacted in France one Bartholomew's day !

First, a purse changes hands—

Then come Chiuda's commands,
 Fully detailed on paper, that nought go amiss—
 And the gist of the scheme, gentle reader, is this ;—
 Mr. Takurô (so's named the rough whom we see,
 And the uncle, moreover, of Sampei is he)
 Is to wait an occasion, as best to his mind,
 And then murder his nephew and all he may find
 'Neath his roof-tree,—in fact, he's to 'go for' the pack of
 'em,

And to 'wipe out' the household, aye, ev'ry man jack
 of 'em !

Oh ! there never was heard such a bloodthirsty thing !

And I'd venture to swear

That, though Tessian's not there,
 He is still the prime mover who's pulling the string !

Scene the Third. — Sampei's parlour to view is dis-
 play'd,

Where his sister O Miné (a dear little maid)
 With the wife of our friend Otogawa is talk-
 ing at home, while the men folks are out for a walk.

Hark ! a bang at the gate !

Hanazono is straight

Bundled into a cupboard, there hidden to wait
 Till the visitor's gone,—then the door's opened wide ;
 Enter Takurô, marching with swaggering stride.



THE CONSPIRATORS.

—He's a sly fellow, Takurô;—what do you think?
He's perceived the whole scene through an opportune
chink!—

How he blusters, fumes, threatens, and swears in a
breath!

Poor O Miné's on tenter-hooks, frightened to death:—

“Ha! ha! *what's in the cupboard?*—here, quick! let
me see,—

Stand aside, Miss, I tell you!—d' you think to ‘bluff’
me?—

Ho! ho! just as I thought,—

Now the pretty bird's caught,—

Come! get out of your nest there, unless you'd be
brought!”

Never heeding her squalls

Or her screams, as she bawls

For “Police!” Hanazono he speedily hauls

From her hiding-place. Now there commences a scene!

Look! her ladyship scuttles beneath a tall screen,—

Then behind the *hibachi** a refuge does take!

What a noise and a hubbub the three of them make!

How they dodge their pursuer! how angrily he

Gives them chase, in a mode quite exciting to see!

As he's close on their track

There resounds a loud ‘whack,’

And the villain goes down with a thump on his back!

While a nicely dressed gentleman, bowing before them,

Bids the ladies take courage, as he will watch o'er
them:—

“Beg your pardon, My Lady:—your lord is my
friend;

He has charged me in haste at this house to attend,

* *Hibachi*, a brazier, or fire-box.

And to offer my escort to point out the way
To a fresh place of refuge he 's chosen to-day ;
 You 'll no doubt feel surprise
 At my words, but your eyes
Will the token he 's sent you at once recognize ;
'Tis this charm-case,—I 'm ordered to show it to you,
As a proof, if required, that my errand is true ;
In the litter with which my retainers here wait
You can ride in a manner beseeeming your state.
By your leave, then — allow me — please follow, I
 pray—
And you, villain, d' ye hear me ?—get out of the way !
Ha ! you *will* have it then !”—and his sword in a
 trice
Has half leapt from its scabbard—too close to be nice,
As our friend Mr. Takurô cannot but feel,
(For the bully, 'twould seem, has a dread of cold
 steel)
So he bounds to one side with uncommon dexterity,
And then bolts for the kitchen with wondrous cele-
 rity ;
 While his foe, with a face
 Full of smiles, and a grace-
ful obeisance, escorts his fair charge to her place
In the gay gilded norimon—pulls down the blind—
Bids his vassals close up, both in front and behind—
Gives the word—and she 's borne off as swift as the
 wind !
And O Miné—in Takurô's mercies so tender ?—
Not at all ; here 's her father come home to befriend
 her.
 He at first is opprest
 With alarm for his guest,
But his daughter explains, and his mind 's set at rest ;

They sit down to their tea ;
(My fair readers may see
What a time-honoured treat must the ' kettledrum ' be !)
Sajidaiyu (the father) 's just put out of sight
His first cup, with a gulp, and a hiss of delight
A la mode japonaise (the true sound I can't give,
But I fancy it 's known to most persons who live
In the isles of Japan),
When a queer little man
Clad in gray, with a staff, and a huge pedlar's pack
That is strapped by stout cords on his feeble old
back,
Puts his head through the door with a smirk and a
grin,
And proceeds to inquire " if there 's anyone in,"
" What ! old Rokubu !—welcome ! what fortune to meet
you !
Pray be seated — we 're always delighted to greet
you ;
You 're a regular stranger — you 're up and you 're
down,
And you 're ev'rywhere, save in our part of the town !
Why, it seems quite an age since your face I last
saw !
And what news do you bring from my daughter-in-
law ? "
Sighs with grief the aged one,
Vainly strives to speak—
Briny tears in torrents run
Down his furrowed cheek—
Scarce a word can he reply
To their greeting kind—
Only broken sobs imply
Dire distress of mind :

From the bundle at his side,
With a look of pain,
Forth he draws a garment, dyed
Deep with crimson stain ;—
“ *This* is all my tidings sore,
This the news I bear—
'Tis your murdered daughter's gore
Dyes her mantle there ! ”—

Here, I 'll frankly confess, my Muse utterly fails
To describe with decorum the shrieks and the wails,
And the howls and the groans,
And the sobs and the moans,
And the curses, too, mutter'd in scarce smother'd
tones,

That are wrung from both father and daughter as well,
As they list to the tale that their guest has to tell !
So suffice it to mention that, could he behold
All the anguish he 's wrought, even Tessian the bold
Some degree of remorse would most certainly feel
At the sight—and you 'll own that that means a good
deal !

Sajidaiyu first dries
His wet cheeks and his eyes,
Wipes his nose on his sleeve, and then hastily flies
Through the gate, down the roadway, in quest of his
son,
To acquaint him at once with the deed that's been
done ;

While O Miné, midst all
That has chanced to befall,
Still remembers, though late, hospitality's call,
And at last with a gulp having managed to sub-
due her grief, asks her guest “ if he 'd like a hot
tub ; ”



EVIL TIDINGS.

He assents ;—as they both through the door disappear,
Mr. Takurô, seeing the coast is all clear,
Re-emerges—what 's up ?—why, I 'm bound to confess
That his aim is to ' prig ' poor O Kiku's silk dress !
“ Here 's the bundle I noted that old buffer drop—
If it only contain something handy to ' pop ' !
What ! a nasty wet dress !—and with stains on it
too—

Why, it 's covered with *blood* !—what a regular ' do ' !
Chez mon oncle, I 'll swear, 'twouldn't fetch half a
bu ! *

Ugh ! it 's giv'n me the creeps ! ”—so his prize he lets
fall,

Then with patent disgust rolls it up in a ball,
And so hangs it, intact, from a peg on the wall.

By some lucky coincidence, here we discern
Otogawa and Sampei together return ;
And the former—(there 's mischief a-brewing, we see)—
Loudly calls for his *wife* !—not a word answers she—
('Twould be strange if she did, for she 's now a good *ri*
On her journey)—“ Hi ! Miné ! what means this strange
trick ?

Where 's her Ladyship ? ”—“ *Who* ? ”—“ Why, my *wife*—
tell me quick ! ”

“ Then 'twas *not* your retainer who took her away ? ”
My retainer ?—no, nonsense !—why, what 's that you
say

'Bout a charm-case ?—'tis mine !—one I lost t'other
day !

Oh, the villain ! he 's used it no doubt to betray
The poor girl to my foes !—here 's the devil to pay !

* 1 *bu* = about 25 cents.

Oh, the rogue!—quick, my sword!—oh, the monster!—
my dirk!

I'll get even, though, with him for this bit of work!"—

See! he bounds from the floor—

Rushes out at the door—

Like a wild bull of Bashan, with shout and with roar

Of defiance!—O Miné close after him follows,

To his bass adds her treble, and plaintively 'holloas'!

(If she last at his pace, though, a marvel 't will be—

'Tis a case of *haud passibus æquis*, you see!)

Here's the chance for which Takurô's waited so long!

Hark! he 'goes for' his nephew in language that's
strong,

Calls him 'blackguardly rascal' and 'reprobate vicious,'

And rebukes him for 'harbouring persons suspicious';

He may bawl till he's hoarse,

Sampei scorns him, of course,

So our bully next thinks of appealing to force;

See! he clutches his throat, and endeavours to dash

Out his brains with a *geta**—when, sudden, a flash

From behind—and the villain goes down with a crash!

And the pedlar stands o'er him with gibe and with
laugh,

And wipes down a long sword he's drawn out from his
staff;

While he shows to young Sampei a letter he's found,

(It is Chiuda's) which Takurô dropped on the ground,

So it seems, as he lately the bundle unwound!

As the prospect of death his wild spirit depresses,

Mr. Takurô 'makes a clean breast,' and confesses

* *Geta*, a wooden clog.

All the plot, without fail ;
He 's scarce finished his tale
When he turns on his stomach, as dead as a nail !
Exit Rokubu, also to join in the chase—
There remains only Sampei, with woebegone face.
By the queer code of honour that guides *samurai*
Mr. Sampei now deems it his duty to die ;
Here 's his uncle been killed in his house !—plain as day
He 's convinced that *his* life, too, the forfeit should pay ;
Never mind about Rokubu—he 's not detected,
'Tis improbable quite that he 'll e'er be suspected :—
So our hero commences, without loss of time,
To prepare straight to ' cut himself off in his prime ' ;
And, in fashion approved, he proceeds first to frame
A long document, taking the whole of the blame
On his own single shoulder ;—this testament bold
He proposes to leave where his friends may behold
And peruse it, long after himself 's dead and cold !

Was that the wind ?—no sound is heard—

The night is silent all—

What was 't that yonder garment stirred

That 's hanging from the wall ?

See ! from the bloodstained mantle float

A ghastly phantom slow !—

O Kiku's self !—her face, we note,

Bears trace of grief and woe.

With yearning gestures, longing eyes,

She flits behind her mate—

Now waves, now beckons, vainly tries,

To lure him from his fate !

Fast speeds his pen across the sheet—

He 'll neither look nor hear—

While lies that charm-case at his feet,

She dare not venture near !

Fast speeds the pen—he's ceased to write—
Once more his head is reared—
The ghost has vanished from our sight,
The phantom's disappeared !

All is ready—the critical moment draws nigh ;—
First he bows to the altar—a pray'r and a sigh
Lets escape in a breath—lays the scroll on the floor,
Chucks the charm-case aside at the back of the
door,
Sits him down with a smile to his terrible work,
Doffs his mantle and vest, and unsheathes his sharp
dirk !
—He lifts his hand—a sudden grasp
Arrests the fatal blow ;
The dirk falls harmless from his clasp
Upon the mat below !
Who's this ?—he stares in wild surprise—
Howe'er did this betide ?
A well-known figure greets his eyes—
O Kiku's at his side !
E'en as she lived, in habit gay,
Returns she to our view—
“ My love ! my dearest husband ! say,
What means this deed you'd do ? ”

Can you fancy the stare of an amorous fop,
Who has screwed up his courage and ventured to
‘ pop,’
When he gets in reply not the word he's expected,
But a ‘ No,’ 'stead of ‘ Yes,’ and is flatly rejected ?
Or imagine the look on a keen jockey's face,
Who has thought himself certain of winning the
race,

But discovers, alas ! when the numbers are read,
He 's been ' done in the eye ' on the post by a head ?

 You may picture all these,

 And e'en more, if you please,

But you *can't* fancy Sampei's queer ' phiz ' when he
sees

He 's detected attempting to take a French leave,
And to cause his poor wife as a widow to grieve !
So he puts up his dirk, lays it back in its place,
And then hangs down his head like a boy in dis-
grace ;—

When he raises his eyes—no O Kiku is there !

She has seized the occasion to melt into air !

 See ! he can't make it out—

 How he rushes about !

Hear him call—and entreat—and then lustily shout !

Not a word in reply to his clamour and rout.

—Here his father comes back, and is startled to learn
The remarkable news of O Kiku's return ;

 In a trice he narrates

 All the tale of the plates,

And of Tessan and Chiuda—" the vile reprobates,"

Till, in fact, he convinces his listener keen

That 'tis only the ghost of poor Kiku he 's seen ;

But as both are indulging in howls of despair,

See ! O Miné flies in with a terrified air,

Hotly chased by a grim-looking murderous elf

With a sword in his grasp—why, 'tis Chiuda himself !

His accomplice not having fulfilled his command,

He has come with th' intention of lending a hand

To the foul work of slaughter so cunningly planned !—

Quickly Sampei springs forward to grapple his foe,

In a moment they 've closed—see ! they rock to and fro,

And then down on the mats in fierce struggle they go !

How they tug and they strain!
 We can see pretty plain,
 That whoe'er may the victory finally gain,
 Won't at all be disposed to his foe to give grace—
 Just observe the clench'd teeth, and each murderous
 face!
 How they kick, punch, gouge, wrestle, belabour, and
 bite!
 Oh! there never was seen such a rattling 'free fight'!
 But it's clear, all the same,
 That though Sampei be 'game,'
 He's no match for his rival's superior frame—
 He's outweighed—and oh! that last knock on his
 brow!
 If there's no one to aid, 'tis U P with him now!
 —Hark, a voice! at which Chiuda's wild frenzy
 abates—
'Tis the voice of a woman a-counting of plates!
 Someone's near, we plain can tell!
 Whence that smoke—that sulph'rous smell?
 From the garment on the wall
 Forth there floats a phantom tall—
 Stern and grim, a form of dread
 Hovers o'er the villain's head!
 Angry features—eyes of fire—
 Threat'ning glance of hatred dire—
 Needs not these to tell us clear
 What's O Kiku's errand here!
 With the swoop of a hawk on a dickey-bird small,
 Down she darts upon Chiuda—(just hark to his bawl
 For assistance!) — “You're wanted! there, make no
 ado—
 Having 'done for' proud Tessan, I've now come for
 you!”

How he raves in his terror—how wildly does storm !
How he slashes and hews at the shadowy form !
How he yells as it seems his attack to deride,
Moving nearer and nearer with swift silent glide !
What a shriek rends the air as it seizes him tight,
And he feels its cold clutch on his throttle alight !
Fairly madden'd by terror, by fear almost crazed,
He yet makes one last effort—his weapon is raised—
Down it comes with a frantic and desperate blow—
But that shadowy form no resistance does show,
And the sharp steel is sheathed, fairly up to the hilt,
In the villain's own carcase—fit meed for his guilt !
There he lies, stiff and stark, right in front of our
 friends—
And away flits the ghost—and the curtain descends !

Now, of course, gentle reader, I hardly need tell
That our play, begun sadly, yet terminates well :
You no doubt can conceive for yourself by this time,
E'en without any aid from my cantering rhyme,
That our friend Otogawa from danger soon frees
His adored Hanazono, and sets her at ease—
That the make-believe friend who enticed her away
Is th' identical thief who (see prologue I pray),
Stole the curio left in the nobleman's hold—
That it chances, of course, that this ruffian bold
Is attacked by young Sampei, and killed in the
 fight—
That the treasure 's returned to its owner of right—
That my lord the Shôgun, when the facts are made
 plain,
Reinstates Otogawa in favour again—

And that Sampei, when tired of a widower's life,
Soon replaces O Kiku, and takes a new wife !
—If you *can't* conceive this, then I've right to com-
plain,
For I fear that my tale has been told but in vain !

MORAL.

I.

Many folks (so I've *heard*) are addicted at times
To an innocent pastime called ' ringing the chimes ' ;
Now, though that's quite *en règle* for once in a way,
For their warning and guidance a maxim I'd lay ;
It is this—don't prolong either frolic or spree,
When the church clock strikes solemnly *one, two, and*
three !

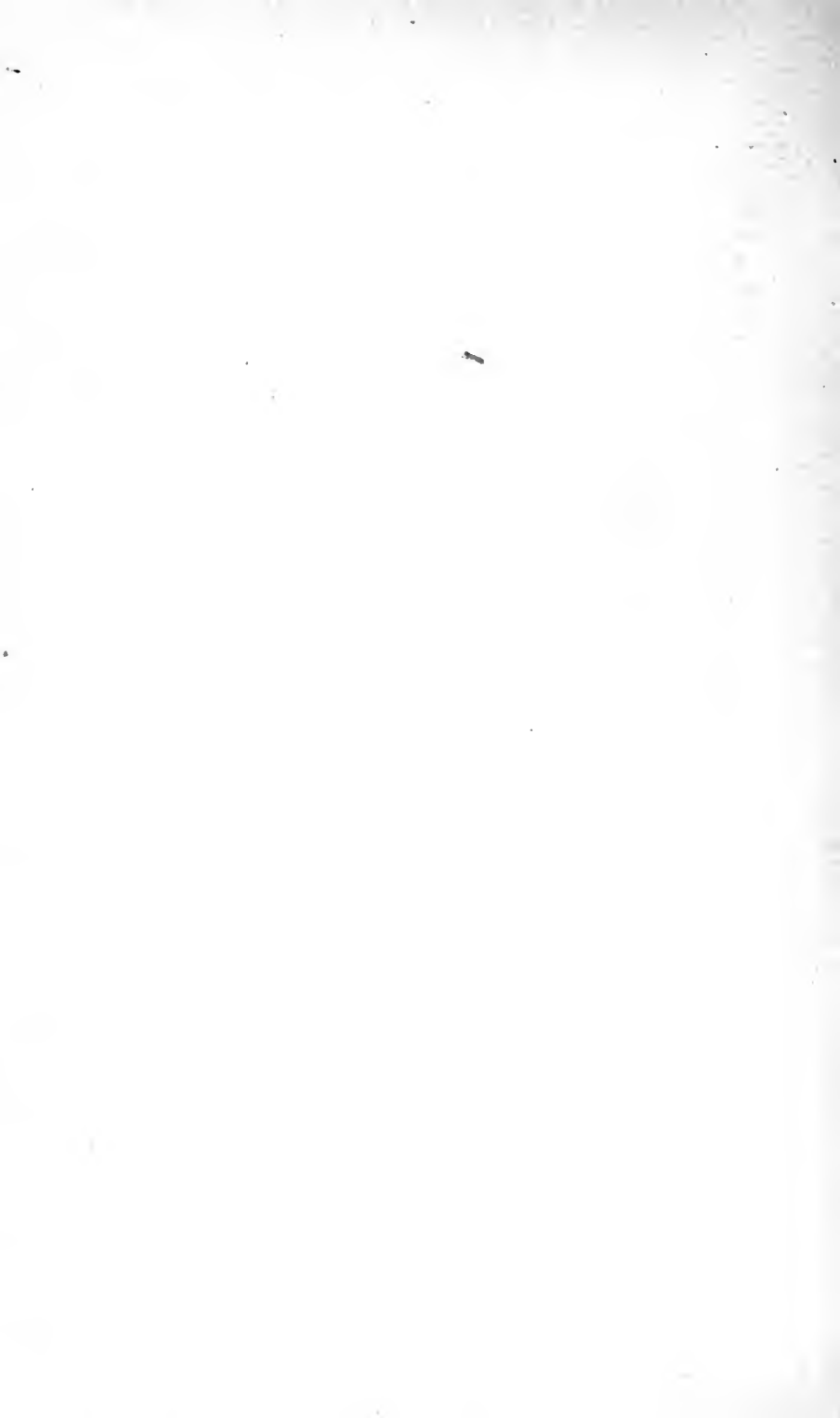
II.

Just a word to ' old residents '—kindly enough ;
And that is—should you chance to reside on the Bluff,
Keep your ' weather eye peeled ' when it gets to be
late,
See your watchman's on duty, and lock up your *plate !*



THE ENCHANTED PALACE.

THIS Play is an adaptation of a portion of a popular novel, or fairy-tale, by the celebrated modern Japanese author Kiokutei Bakin. It affords an excellent idea of the general style of light literature in this country. We regret that we are unable to provide our readers with more detailed information as to the fame and the deeds of the clerical hero than is herein contained.



The Enchanted Palace;

*A Fragment from the Original Japanese Play of "Saiyuki"
("A Trip in the West"), as Performed at the Saru-
wakamachi Theatre, Asakusa, Tôkiô, in October, 1878.*

WHERE 's the knight of heart so bold
Dares invade the wizard's hold ?
Who alone of mortal men
Dares approach the syren's den ?
Where 's the spirit shall not quail,
Dares the 'Black Cloud Mountain' scale ?
Where the hero ?—quick, declare !—
Echo only answers, "Where ?"

"And where *was* this said mountain ?"—I sternly
object

To commit myself, Reader, in any respect ;
For, in fact, its position to demonstrate right
Is a task for which I am incompetent quite ;—

Yet this much will I say—
Take your Atlas down, pray ;
Now, just hit the west border of 'spicy Cathay' ;
(Have you got it ?)—then, next, will you carefully
 scan
All the district from thence down to fair Hindostan ;—
Well, 'twas *somewhere* 'bout there—beyond that, as I
 live,
Not the least information I'm able to give ;
But this much I will swear—not a word I'll retract—
That there *was* such a mountain's a positive fact !

Huge, sombre, silent and sublime
The 'Black Cloud Mountain' frowned,
A landmark till the end of time
For countless leagues around ;
With massive form upreared on high,
With crags that seemed to pierce the sky,
So tall, so sharp they rose,—
Its tow'ring peak, with cloudy wreath,
Looked down on other hills beneath
Its diadem of snows,
As some gigantic champion, born
Of godlike race, might glance with scorn
On Liliputian foes !
Yes, it looked very fine from a distance, I'll own,
As a king may look noble and grand on his throne ;
But suppose that the monarch should order his men
Quick to lead you away to the scaffold,—how then ?
Would you *still* call him 'gracious' ?—Believe me, my
 friends,
'To the view it is distance enchantment that lends' !
(Thus I freely translate the old proverb you know,
Running '*omne ignotum pro magnifico.*')

And just so this same mountain, though grand to the
eye,

Was a different thing when one ventured too nigh ;
For each person who wasn't contented to view it,
But endeavoured to climb it, had reason to rue it !
Many dozens of 'globe-trotters,' eager and proud,
Thought to gain some slight *kudos* by 'doing' 'Black
Cloud' ;

Many dozens, I say, started off on the track,
('They'd be up in a jiffey, and down in a crack ! ')
But alas ! for their boasting — they *never came
back !*

Like the sick lion's den
Of which Horace makes men-
tion (Epistles, Lib. I.,—but the line's slipped my
ken),

Some *perhaps* may have 'scaped, but no soul came
across 'em,

—As a rule 'twas '*vestigia nulla retrorsum*' !

(That's the line, by the way,

So historians say,

Was inscribed on John Hampden's war-banner so gay,

As a kind of a hint that he never would yield,

When he rode to his death on the famed Chalgrove
Field.

—What a strange thing a man of John Hampden's
fine stamp

Should have sided with Cromwell, that regicide scamp !)

Oh ! many a band,

With 'Murray' in hand,

Tried to scale those steep heights and that pinnacle
grand—

Oh ! many a party, and many a crowd,
Started off on a picnic to famous ' Black Cloud ' —
But they stayed there *for ever*, not merely *pro tem.* ;
' Stead of ' doing ' the mountain, the mountain ' did ' *them !*

Now it chanced, at that time, that in fair Hindostan
There resided a truly remarkable man ;
This was Sanzô, a priest, for his wisdom renowned,
For his virtue, his tact, and his learning profound :
He 'd devoted his lifetime to clerical work,
And in fact was a pretty ' big wig ' in the kirk,
But I can't hit his title off right to the letter,
So I 'll dub him the ' Bishop ' for want of a better.

A gentle kindly man was he,
Who strove to labour right ;
Indeed, he 'd compass land and sea
To make a proselyte :
His high silk cap was fashioned well
By lovely devotees,
So also was the robe that fell
In folds unto his knees ;
The graceful apron, too, that hid
His somewhat sombre frock,
Was broidered by the fairest kid
In Bishop Sanzô's flock :
What wonder that, while such reward
His pious heart delighted,
The worthy priest should labour hard
T' enlighten souls benighted !

Add to this that the Bishop was sturdy and strong,
That his frame was tough, muscular, wiry, and long ;
That he stood on his ' pins ' just as firm as a rock,
And could stick to a saddle as tight as a ' jock,'



THE BISHOP AND HIS RETAINERS.

And was always in training, throughout the whole
year,
Had the wind of an ostrich, the pace of a deer ;
That he 'd tramped it on foot through each neighbour-
ing clime,
And subsisted on acorns for weeks at a time ;
That he shunned beer, tobacco, gin cock-tails, big
dinners,
Heavy tiffins, and all such delights of weak sinners ;
That his features were handsome, his manners were
mild,
That his voice was as soft as the lisp of a child,
(Here I mean a *good* child, for I hardly need say
When a brat squalls aloud there 's the —— to pay !)
That his chest it was broad, and his limbs they were
straight,
That he stood in his sandals just five feet and eight,—
There !—you know Bishop Sanzô, that eminent man,
The most popular preacher in all Hindostan !

One morn, for reasons good no doubt,
This jolly priest so sage
Bestrode his steed, and sallied out
On pious pilgrimage ;
Not the first he had gone, by full many a day,
And this time his steps turned towards the land of
Cathay.
Three retainers, bold and true,
Followed in his rear ;
Quaint they were and strange to view,
Yet to him most dear ;
First, a Man of mortal mould,
Ne'er did puzzled eye behold
Flunkey half so queer ;

Foremost he of all the band,
Brandishing with ready hand
Crescent-headed spear :—
Next, there stepped a wondrous shape ;
'Twas a most gigantic Ape,
Whom the Bishop's fame
Had, from out his forests wild,
Lured, and rendered meek and mild,
Tractable and tame !
Last, there followed in the wake,
Shouldering a lengthy rake,
Vassal No. Three ;
'Twas a dog of stature great,
Marching, with an air sedate,
On his hind legs, tall and straight
E'en as soldier free !
Each in sombre garb was drest,—
Sable jerkin, ditto vest
Edged with gold, black leather belt,
' Butcher boots ' of sable felt :—
In the van the master rode,
Close behind the vassals trode,—
Thus their journey they began,
Bishop, Monkey, Dog, and Man.

Brightly opes the fair morning, up rises the sun ;
See ! his rays gild the hills as his race is begun ;
Even ' Black Cloud ' itself, 'neath that glorious
light,
Loses half the weird aspect it wore over-night,

Till, in fact, you're inclined, as the landscape you
view,
Ev'ry ominous tale to regard as untrue.
So, no doubt, thinks our worthy old clerical friend,
As he slowly prepares yonder ridge to descend ;
While his steed, and the Monkey, the Dog, and the
Man,
With an eye of approval the scenery scan ;—
Wait a moment, good Sirs,—round the base of that
hill,
Straight before you's a sight that's more marvellous
still—
Hark ! a yelp from the Dog, from the Bishop a cry,
As a Palace superb greets their wondering eye !
Ne'er did human hands erect
Palace such as here,
Ne'er did mortal architect
Such a mansion rear !
Stares the Bishop, struck with dread,—
Dog and Man would fain have fled,—
E'en the Monkey shakes his head,
Thinks it rather queer !
—'Tis a marvellous structure, indeed, to behold ;—
Ev'ry timber is fastened with rivets of gold ;
From the roof to foundation with jewels 'tis deck'd,
Gleaming bright as the sunbeams whose rays they
reflect ;
All the tiles are of ivory, polished with care ;
All the beams, posts, and rafters of satin-wood rare ;
And, in fact, gentle Reader, I'll boldly declare
That, so far as my own slender knowledge goes, ne'er
Did a scared human eye
Such a Palace descry
As the Bishop and Co. now before them espy !

—But no noise of a footstep is heard in its halls,
Not a single face looks from its glittering walls,
All is silent and still as the sepulchre, and a
Silken veil quite shuts in e'en the spacious verandah !

Hark ! a weird, a solemn air,
Notes of music sweet !
Fairy music, such as ne'er
Mortal ears did greet !
Soft, celestial, dulcet strain,
Fascinating sound !
Loud it swells, and peals amain,
Echoes far around !

While the Bishop—good soul ! all whose musical skill
Was confined to the banjo or tin-whistle shrill ;
Who delighted to list to the wild stirring tones
That a *gamin's* deft hand can evoke from the
'bones' ;

And who loved e'en the tom-tom or Indian drum—
Stands as still as a post, as a statue as dumb !
There he lingers, enraptured and awe-struck and
dazed :—

Sudden sinks the weird tune,—'fore his vision amazed
Slowly, softly, the long silken curtain is raised !

If the *outside* be gorgeous, what words can avail
To describe the yet further magnificent scale
Of th' apartment *within* !—here I frankly will own
That I *can't* do it justice ;—I 'll leave it alone,
And beseech you to picture the scene, Reader kind,
For yourself, as may best suit your fanciful mind !

Yet this much will I tell—

As the dull oyster-shell

Is outshone by the pearls in its bosom that dwell,—

As the rich fruity part
Of a raspberry tart
Is more dear than the crust to a juvenile heart,—
Even so with this palace (no metaphor thin)
By so much is its *outside* surpassed by its *in* !

‘ Lovely woman,’ we know, has from earliest times
Ever proved a stock theme for the troubadour’s
rhymes ;

Choose out *any* poems, pick out *any* name,—
Love, Ladies, and Liquor—’tis *always* the same !

And you’ll speedily see

E’en my Pegasus free

Will ere long take a flight at each one of the three.

—*Place aux dames* ! (for to yield them the *pas* I am
bound)

As the Bishop stands staring, and glued to the
ground,

Softly rings a sweet voice, (in a trice he’s astir !)

“ You are heartily welcome, right reverend Sir !

Do repose for awhile, in yon arbour pray seat
you ;

Both myself and my ladies are happy to meet
you ! ”

No doubt you’ve heard the legend told

How once, in bygone days of old,

A Saint, by virtue fired,

Withstood temptation’s subtle wile,

Though shown in most enticing style,

But scorn’d th’ alluring maiden’s smile,

And all unscathed retired :

Yet had that callous anchorite

But viewed what greets our Bishop’s sight,

I'll wager even he
(Unless a very iceberg grown)
Had somewhat changed his steadfast tone,
Nor e'er to us the fame been known
Of 'blest St. Anthony' !
From the Palace emerges a beautiful tribe
Of fair damsels, whose charms I can scarcely de-
scribe ;
For such figures, such faces, such elegant mien,
I'll confess I have dreamt of, but never have seen !
Their complexions are fair,
And their glossy black hair
Is adorned with long tortoise-shell hair pins, so rare
They would cause any jeweller blankly to stare.
Their bewitching, soft eyes are quite coal-black in
hue,
(For myself, I must own, I prefer 'em of blue)
And their figures, slight, supple, and *not* over big,
Are as lissome and lithe as a willow-tree's twig !
Each is clothed in silk raiment of quality fine,
Where the fanciful hues of the rainbow combine
To produce such a glowing and charming effect
That 'twould seem—but, kind Reader, you scarce can
expect
That a bachelor bard should be able as yet
To describe as is fitting a lady's toilette !
So I 'pass' ;—ev'ry damsel's white finger-tips hold
A long spindle, whose staff is of burnished red
gold,
With a top-knot of delicate fine cotton thread
Wound about a light framework that's fixed on the
head.
—In advance, with a somewhat imperious mien,
Moves a lady whose age might perhaps be eighteen ;

By the deference shown her it well may be seen
 That the others regard her as being their Queen :
 She is ten times as charming, ten times better drest,
 And a hundred-fold lovelier, too, than the rest !
 She it is whose sweet voice called the travellers nigh,
 And she now stands awaiting the Bishop's reply,
 While her maidens, with mischievous mirth in each
 eye,
 Murmur softly, "*Yô koso—!—o hairi nasai!*" *

In the good Bishop Sanzô's kind heart-strings one
 spot
 For *les dames* had been ever remarkably hot ;
 He adored lovely eyes, almost worshipped swan-
 necks—
 Was a slave, in a word, to the charms of ' the sex ' !
 (And, indeed, scandal says
 In the Bishop's young days
 He was *rather* addicted to frolicking ways ;
 And was more than once guilty of conduct quite shady
A propos of some simple, confiding young lady :
 —But we 'll let the tale rest,—ev'ryone's had his day
 In the time of his 'hot youth,' when Plancus bore
 sway !)
 So, the spell being broke,
 Th' invitation once spoke,
 In a trice he accepts it, turns loose his white 'moke,'
 Sits him down on a stool 'neath a sheltering tree,
 Nothing loth, so 'twould seem, for a bit of a spree ;
 Yet, with keen eye to business, his motive so staid is
 —"If I could but convert these benighted young
 ladies!"

* "Welcome! pray enter!"

Fire away, my good Bishop!—but first let me mention

That they're quite unaware of your pious intention;
And no matter, indeed, though they knew it—I vow
You yourself have more need of conversion just now!

—Oh! the feast that they tend

To our clerical friend!

There are puddings, cakes, dumplings, and sweets
without end!

Then, for fish,—turbot, lobsters, stewed oysters, fried
soles!

And delicious raw *daikon*, and delicate rolls!

Incomparable *saké*, Itami's * best brew,

(On the barrel the *kembishi* † brand you may view!)

But what ails the good Bishop? his manner so quaint
is—

I'll be hanged if he tastes even one of the dainties!

As regards liquor also he's just as refraining,

Puts aside proffered drinks with, “No, thanks; *I'm in training!*”

Has he chanced to espy

Any circumstance sly

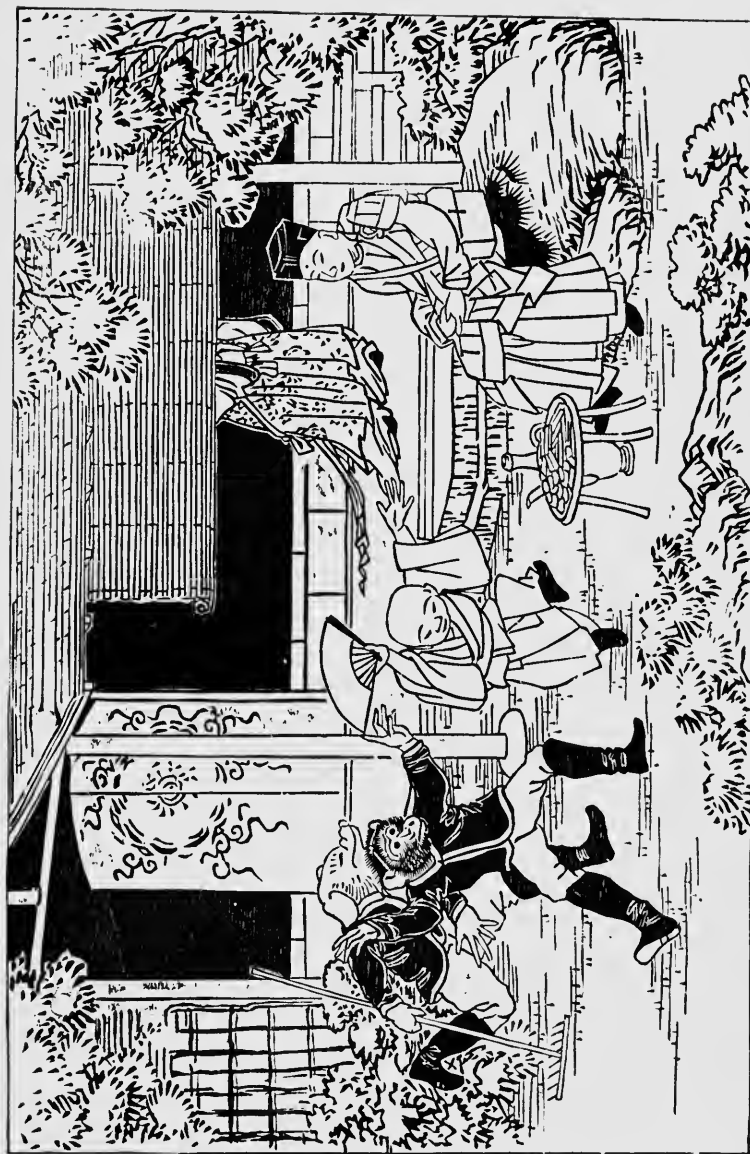
That has warned him against being ‘done in the
eye’!

Have those words of the Sage sounded fresh in his
ear,

Which remark that ‘to danger the wise draw not
near’?

* A village in the province of Settsu, Japan, noted for the excellence of its *saké*.

† *Kembishi*, “the sword-blade and diamond,” a favourite brand of Itami *saké*.



THE MERRYMAKERS.

I can't guess, I can't say ;
Be that all as it may,
See! he won't 'wet his whistle' nor 'moisten his
clay' !
There he sits on his stool, solemn, silent, and glum,
Watchful, wary, alert, keen and cautious, and dumb :
In his hostess's face, too, 'tis plainly expressed
That she can't quite make out this abstemious
guest !
But though *he* may decline any share in their was-
sails,
It is *tout au contraire* with his jovial vassals ;
 ' Nary ' one of the three
 Can resist a good spree,
(After living on acorns how thin they must be !)
So with all the rich viands they gladly make free.
How they swallow the sweetmeats — demolish the
fish !
With what bumpers of liquor they wash down each
dish !
Soon the mirth grows uproarious—loudly they call,
" Choose your partners !—a dance ;—now to open the
ball ! "

First the Dog takes the floor—on his shaky hind-
paws
He goes through a *pas seul* that elicits applause ;
Next the Man follows suit with a hornpipe or two ;
Then the Monkey and he rattle off a *pas deux* ;
And then, lastly, the ladies to join them are drawn,
And they all foot it merrily over the lawn !
Oh, what ogling ! what squeezing of fingers ! what
bliss !
What flirtation ! and (must I confess ?) what a
kiss !

Yes, the Dog misbehaves ;—quite forgetting his place,
Tries to clasp the fair Queen in his drunken embrace,
And the Queen—knocks him down with a slap on the
face !

Just conceive, if you can, the priest's sad consterna-
tion

That his trusty 'bow-wow,'

So polite until now,

Should on such short acquaintance attempt oscula-
tion !

So that kiss is the climax !—he springs to his feet,
Re-arranges his robes, strides away from his seat,
And without e'en so much as a word of adieu
Turns the corner, and rides away fast out of view,
While his vassals run after him—now only two,

For the hound

On the ground

In a slumber profound

Lies at length, quite unconscious of sight or of sound !
—For veracity's sake (though the word's scarce
polite)

I must own that the Dog's unmistakably 'tight' !

While the Dog is wrapped in sleep,

See ! the ladies forward creep ;

Slow and stealthy is their pace,

Stern and cruel ev'ry face !

Waving high their spindles long

Towards the sleeper close they throng—

Waken, Dog ! nor tempt thy fate !

Waken, ere it be too late !

But the Dog doesn't stir — there he lies on the
ground,

And his merciless foes gather silently round !

See ! the Queen here gives a sign !
Quick their threads they now entwine
Round their guest, who lies supine !
Swift they ply their spindles bright,
Soon they 've tied their captive tight ;
Faster still they spin and wind,
Faster still the victim bind ;
Like a fly he seems, and they
Spiders gloating o'er their prey !

Yes, the secret is out !—you will scarce feel surprise
At the news that these damsels, so fair to our eyes,
Are *tarantula spiders* in human disguise !
As the somnolent captive 's dragged off to their prison,
See ! the Man scampers back with lugubrious 'phiz '
on,

Just to see what's become
Of his *ci-devant* chum.

At the sight he stands horror-struck, nerveless, and
dumb !

And alack !

In a crack

He sustains the attack

And th' assault of the whole diabolical pack !

How he shrieks ! how he struggles with might and with
main

To escape from the toils !— he may tug, he may
strain,

But he can't slip the cords that encompass his
throttle—

In a moment he 's trussed like a second blue-bottle !

Hark ; with harsh, forbidding grate,

Stubborn locks give way ;

Slowly opes the creaking gate,

Yawning for its prey !

In his breast th' unhappy Man
Feels his heart's blood freeze ;
Fearsome scene his eyes do scan,
Awful sight he sees !
Sight that all his senses dulls,
Wrings his breast with groans—
Rows on rows of grinning skulls,
Piles of bleaching bones !
Now, alas ! the whole horrible myst'ry's unravelled !
All those skulls once belonged to 'globe-trotters' who
travelled
Over 'Black Cloud' — those bones at some previous
time, it
May be guessed, were the shins of the folks who *would*
climb it ;
And the Dog and the Man may right well feel dejection
At the prospect of adding to such a collection !
What is that?—what the sound that now strikes on our
ear ?
'Tis the tramp of a horse urg'd to headlong career !
Near and nearer it comes ! — ere a word can be
spoke,
Down the glen gallops wildly the Bishop's white
'moke.'
How his rider is working, with whip and with rein !
How he 'shoves in the Latchfords' with might and with
main !
Why, he seems in no whit less determined a state
Than a jock in the ruck turning into the straight !
Close behind the Monkey springs,
Bounds as though possessed of wings ;
Wields aloft his iron crook,
(Something like a fireman's hook),



THE BISHOP IN DANGER.

Shouts, and howls, and yells amain,
Strives his master to detain !
Sanzô little recks or hears,
Nought regards his vassals fears,
Scarcely heeds the frantic cry
“ Bishop ! Bishop ! *abunai !* ” *

Darkness closes around ; for an instant the hill
Is obscured from our sight—all is silent and still :
Then a crash as of thunder resounds through the air,
Bright and vivid there flashes the lightning’s weird
glare !

Peal on peal rolls above us—while loudly around
Mingled shrieks, pray’rs and groans all our senses
confound,

Savage yells and wild war-whoops incessantly sound !
(It reminds one, in fact, of those dreadful *mêlées*,
—Which delighted us muchly in childhood’s sweet
days—

Such as Fenimore Cooper so aptly describes
As of common occurrence ’mongst Indian tribes !)

Now each flash of the light-
ning affords a brief sight

Of the ups and the downs of a desperate fight,
Where the Bishop and Monkey are fiercely beset
By a crew of grim demons, with faces of jet,
Gleaming tusks, and red eye-balls, and long hairy
paws

That are garnished with bunches of nasty black claws !

The Bucephalus white,

Fairly maddened by fright,

Snorts and screams, bucks and plunges and jibs—but as
tight

* “ Beware ! ”

As a leech to his back the good clerico sticks,
Holding on by the mane and the pommel 'like
bricks'!

While the Monkey, unscared by the vicious attacks,
Stands his ground, and his master most gallantly
backs;

 Come one, come all,

 They can't appal!

Quick as thought the smart strokes of his weapon now
fall!

One he hits on the nose, trips a second one flat,
Punches this in the eye, 'puts a head' upon that,
Whacks a fifth on the ribs, brains a sixth at a
blow,

'Taps their claret,' and 'rattles their ivories,' so
That they sheer off awhile. Like a shaft from the bow

 The good Bishop 'makes tracks,'

 And his foes being lax,

He has burst through their ranks 'in a couple of
cracks,'

Spurs his charger, and flies 'over bank, bush, and
scaur,'

In a style unsurpassed e'en by 'young Lochinvar'!

(That's a rider who, if the tale's true that we're told,

Was a first-flight performer 'cross country of old,

And who 'lifted' his bride like a lamb from the
fold!)

Sauve qui peut! he scarce thinks, as careering he
goes,

That he's left the poor Ape in the hands of his foes!

Light dawns upon the mountain side ;
No Palace greets our eyes !
Where once it stood in all its pride,
Now crags and boulders rise !
Vanish 'd the hall—the ladies fled—
A dismal pile of rocks
That rears aloft its rugged head
Alone our vision mocks !
Yet o'er that huge dark mass is spread
A net, of texture fine,
E'en as the web the spider's thread
So cunningly doth twine.
To be brief, you the sombre exterior view
Of the larder (or gaol) of the devilish crew,
Where our friends lie confined, in as dismal a
state
As is fitting in view of their probable fate !

Hark ! from 'neath the granite thick
Muffled strokes resound ;
Strokes as of a miner's pick
Plying underground !
Louder yet, and nearer still—
Blow succeeding blow—
Someone's working with a will
In the cave below !
Harder yet we hear him hit ;
(Practised hand, and deft)
Crack ! the massive rock is split,
Right in sunder cleft !
With a whoop of delight, and a wild somersault,
See ! the Monkey bounds forth from the grim charnel
vault,

Rends the web, and ne'er pausing the fragments to
scan,
'Cuts his stick'—he is free! they may catch him who
can!

With a leap that would make e'en an acrobat stare,
Up aloft springs the Monkey, and sails through the
air!

His gyrations are wonderful—upward he flies,
Soaring high as a lark on its flight to the skies!
(Yet it's not quite a *flight* in the true sense with
him,

But a style that's a cross 'twixt a run and a swim,
With a *soupçon*—no more—of the swing that's applied
By an athlete when taking his hurdles 'in stride'!)

As he paddles through the air
From his chest he plucks the hair,
Sows it broadcast to the wind,
Right and left, in front, behind;

And the wondrous results that succeed to this action
Cause us blankly to stare in profound stupefaction:
(Tis the Grand Transformation Scene, here I may
say,

That is always considered the gem of this play.)

Ev'ry hair that falls to earth
Gives an infant monkey birth!
Legions of fantastic shapes,
Crowds of tiny baby apes,
Sudden rise from none knows where,—
Each the ditto of his *père*!
Wielding each an iron prong
On in countless hordes they throng,
Jumping like so many shrimps—
Mirth-provoking little imps!

“ Children ! listen to me ! ” here the Monkey does say,
“ There is *work* to be done—real labour, no play !
In the dungeon beneath yonder mountain of granite
there languish two pris’ners, the Dog and the
Man :

Set them free ! that’s the task you are bound to
fulfil—

Close your ranks, then ! quick march ! fall to work with
a will ! ”

With a yell of defiance, a howl of delight,
See ! the juvenile army swarms on to the fight !
So determined they seem, that we safely may guess
That their efforts ere long must be crown’d with suc-
cess :—

But alas ! we’re not favoured with sight of the fun—
For the curtain here falls—and my fairy tale’s done !

I can hardly conceive that my Readers require
Any comments of mine on this tragedy dire.
You may guess for yourselves how the good Bishop
cried
With delight when his vassals returned to his side—
How the Dog, from that day,
Never, even in play,
Tried to steal a sly kiss from a *demoiselle* gay—
How the Man, after all
That had chanced to befall,
Never tasted malt liquors, nor went to a ball—

How the Monkey, too, strove his misdeeds to atone,
Grew devout, and went in for tough reading alone—
How they all sailed on smoothly o'er life's troublous
 tide,
And at last in the odour of sanctity died !
For the mem'ry's still cherished, throughout Hindo-
 stan,
Of the Bishop, the Monkey, the Dog, and the Man !



THE FENCING MASTER.

THIS tale is NOT founded on fact, and is, indeed, only remarkable in that it throws some light on the Japanese law of succession. The general rule was, that the son of the true wife should be the heir, even though he might be younger than the offspring of the concubine ; but it cannot be supposed that the latter always submitted tamely to such a decision. It is said, and may well be believed, that this rule gave rise to numberless intrigues in noble families, particularly those of the HATAMOTO, and in many cases the quarrel was only settled after blood had been shed. We are, however, happy to observe that the difference of opinion was arranged in a more amicable manner in this present instance.

The Fencing Master ;

From the Original Japanese Play of "Nikaigasa" ("A Pair of Hats"), as Performed at the Saruwaka-machi Theatre, Asakusa, Tôkiô, in October, 1878.

MANY long years ago,—
 Some two hundred or so,
 The precise date, alas ! I don't happen to know,—
 Dwelt in Yedo a person whom ev'ryone knew
 As the crack Fencing Master—the agèd Yagiu :
 He was heir to a name
 And a family fame
 That unsullied through centuries down to him came ;
 He was five-eight in height,
 And stood straight and upright,
 Though his face was all wrinkled from age, and as
 white
 As a snowflake his hair ;—his complexion was light ;
 He 'd a merry dark eye, spite of tell-tale 'crow's feet' ;
 And a smile and a manner remarkably sweet ;

And his face was so kindly, you never would dream
 His profession was that of a *maître d'escrime* !
 Yet could kindle that glance, and could sparkle that
 eye,

At the 'clackety-clack' of a trusty *shinaye* ; *
 And, for all his white hairs and his wrinkled old face,
 He could deal the 'pear-splitter' † with infinite grace,
 Wield the sharp *naginata* ‡ with exquisite skill,
 Fence with one sword, or two, or (more difficult still)
 Use the 'sickle and ball,' § or the spear with a will
 And in style that his pupils with envy would fill :—
 Through the whole of the realm of Japan there were few
 Who could e'er hope to rival the gallant Yagiu !
 Says a proverb that lately I chanced to discover,—
 'If lucky at cards, you're unlucky in love' ;
 —(I remember a friend of my own, who'd a knack
 Of acquiring *sans cesse* the best cards in the pack ;
 And whene'er I consented to have 'a small game,'
 He'd get 'full hands,' 'four aces,' or 'three of the
 same,'

 Whilst the best fist that e'er

 Fell to my humble share

Was no more and no less than a paltry 'two pair' !
 Well, *that man's still unmarried*—I'll venture to say
 That he's likely a Cælebs for ever to stay !)—

* *Shinaye*, the Japanese fencing-stick, formed of slips of bamboo bound together with catgut and leather.

† *Nashiwari*, or 'pear-splitter,' a full hit on the crown of the head.

‡ *Naginata*, a long halberd, formed of a broad sword-blade attached to a spear-shaft.

§ *Kusari-gama*, lit. 'chain-sickle,' formed of an ordinary Japanese sickle (in shape like a miniature scythe) with a heavy ball of metal attached thereto by a slender iron chain; the chain and ball are whirled round so as to entangle the adversary's weapon, and the sharp-pointed sickle is used at close quarters.

Mars and Venus, again, though they 're closely allied,
Do not *always* jog peaceably on side by side ;
And 'twas thus with my hero—thought Fate might
afford

Him renown *à propos* of his skill with the sword,
Yet *at home* the poor fellow was fearfully bored
By a question that ever unsolved would remain ;—
What the puzzle was here I'll proceed to explain.

In Japan
They've this plan

For a family man,
When his tribe don't increase as it ought, that he
can,

If he wish it, bring home a fresh partner for life
As an 'Acting,' 'Assistant,' or 'Number Two' wife !

Very nice, you'll agree,

For *Monsieur le mari*,

Thus avoiding the prospect of dying *s. p.*

(*Sine prole*, that means—genealogists' word),

Though the *honsai* * at times doesn't like it, I've heard ;

Then what dire complications may happen, you see,

If the *first* and the *second* spouse cannot agree !

(Ah ! there's nought like one sole *placens uxor domi* !)

Or, again, there are other small chances in sight

That may spoil one's domestic felicity quite ;

Such a one did arrive to our Mister Yagiu

That it put the old chap in a terrible stew.

'Twould appear that our hero, right early in life,

Had been pleased to bring home a most charming
young wife ;

* *Honsai*, real wife.

'Twas a love-match,—their tiffs and their quarrels were
few;
But alas! the weeks, months, and e'en years swiftly
flew,
And there still were no signs of a little Yagiu!
Most annoying, 'tis true—
Nought was left him to do
Save to follow the custom I've mentioned above,
And, in short, to seek out and secure a fresh love;
So one day Mrs. Y., to her pain and disgust,
Found herself superseded—aside she was thrust
By a smart little *geisha*,* bewitching and flashy,
From a tea-house alongside the Riôgoku-bashi: †
Time elapsed, and at length, to the Fencer's great
joy,
He became the proud *père* of a fine little boy!
Whereupon 'Number One,'
Not to be thus outdone,
Did her best in *her* turn,—ere a twelvemonth had run,
She had *also* presented her lord with a son!
Now of course you'll perceive, from this ample digres-
sion,
What it was that occasioned the father's depression,
'Twas, in fact, but the thoughts of the law of succes-
sion;
For, though equally dear,
It was none the less clear
That but *one* of the youngsters he'd got on his hands
Could inherit his title and mansion and lands;
And so equal a love did he feel for the pair,
That he *couldn't* select either one as his heir:

* *Geisha*, a singing-girl.

† A famous bridge in Tôkiô.

Whereupon the mammas for a verdict did press,
Each, of course, with an eye to *her* baby's success,
And so loud waxed the strife that their lord, in a rage,
Vowed at last, with an oath, that he'd make no
engage-

ment at all in the matter, but quietly wait,
And commit the decision to time and to Fate !

Meanwhile, the sturdy bantlings twain,

The source of all this ill,

Wax'd fat and big, and throve amain,

As healthy babies will ;

They filled their father's heart with glee

(He loved domestic joys)—

Upon my word, you'd seldom see

Such chubby little boys !

(Master Jiubei the elder was named, I should state ;
Mataichirô he who'd arrived rather late.)

And when to childhood's morning tide

Did boyhood's noon succeed,

They ne'er their parentage belied,

But proved their birth and breed ;

And though, perchance, they often strove,

And quarrel followed play,

When all was o'er, fraternal love

Again resumed her sway !

Then, just fancy their gallant old *guv'nor's* delight

When they grew up to manhood, so clever and bright,

So accomplished, so handsome, so fair to the sight !

Oh ! what pleasure, what pride, and what rapture he
felt

When they first swaggered forth with two swords at
their belt !

How he taught them to fence ! and how apt they
became !

How they studied each trick of the dangerous game!
 How they toiled ev'ry cut, thrust, and parry to learn,
 Every feint, ev'ry guard, ev'ry counter in turn!
 Till, at last, as his precepts they'd strictly obey,
 Not a man in the realm could fence better than they;
 They could 'see' all their chums, 'nary' one was their
 match,

And in each *gekikēnkwai** they started at 'scratch'!
 Then, of course, these young noblemen, *more suorum*,
 Were at times not averse to a breach of decorum;
 Each could drink like a fish, when the liquor did flow,
 And they never gave in under less than three *shō*.†
 They could gamble and brawl, and could swagger and
 fret—

And could flirt with each pretty young damsel they
 met—

And could turn a good verse, and could write it with
 care,

And present it with grace to a singing-girl fair:—
 Not a soul with their dash, wit, or learning could vie;
 Though you searched Japan over, you never would spy
 Such a brace of gay, reprobate young *samurai*!
 But, of course, this same gambling and flirting and
 drinking

Made their yearly allowances vanish 'like winking';
 So at last they resolved to lead steadier lives,
 And, in proof of contrition, took unto them wives;

 This was all very nice,
 'Twas arranged in a trice,

For their sire was quite willing his offspring should
 'splice';

* *Gekikēnkwai*, a fencing tournament, in which the competitors engage in pairs; the winners are then pitted against each other, until one only remains, who is declared the victor.

† 1 *shō* = about 3 imperial pints.

Yet, the nuptials well over, but little space was it
Ere the skeleton once more stepped out of its closet !

For you 'll readily see

And agree, too, with me,

That in view of the probable chances that *three*
Generations might ere long be on the *tapis*,
Worthy Mr. Yagiu ought to set matters square
By selecting, for certain, one son as his heir ;
But he *couldn't* yet do it—he shuffled and waited,
Put the evil day off, lingered, procrastinated,
Ever hoping, 'gainst hope, that some providence kind
Would enable him shortly to make up his mind ;—
Like Micawber (or me, too, when hunting a rhyme)
He was ' waiting for something to turn up ' in time !

And it *did*, with a vengeance !—ere married a year
Master Jiubei's behaviour became rather queer ;

Hour on hour would he stare

With a strange, vacant air,

Quite regardless of aught that was said by his *père*,—
Then he next took to wearing long straws in his air,—
Rolled his eyes till you 'd see nothing else than the
white,—

Put his wife, poor O Tei, in the deuce of a fright
By declaring hobgoblins attacked him each night,—
Snatched his dirk from its sheath in a manner unplea-
sant,*

And endangered the lives of the company present,—
Till, to wind up the sum of each wonderful antic,
He one day drove his agèd old father half frantic
By *forgetting his sword* * when he passed from the room !
How the Fencer did rave, weep with passion, and fume

* Two of the gravest breaches of etiquette of which a Japanese gentleman, under the old *régime*, could possibly be guilty.

At the thought that a son of the house of Yagiu
Such a simply preposterous action should do,
And should sully his name and his lineage high
By a crime so unworthy a true *samurai* !

Clearly something was wrong—

He had waited too long

As it was—so he called in the doctor with speed,
And besought his assistance the riddle to read ;
But alas ! he too soon learned what ailed the poor
lad,

The physician confirmed his forebodings so sad—
Master Jiubei, his first-born, was stark staring *mad* !

Fully three years have flown, swift and silent, away,
Yet no change has occurred in the plot of our play !
And the Fencer at noon is reclining at ease,
With his family round him, enjoying the breeze
And the view of his garden's choice flowers and
trees,

When a servant flies in, calls his master by name,
And announces an Envoy of rank and of fame
From my lord the Shôgun, with a message of state—
“ Show him in,” cries the Fencer—a moment they
wait,

Then the door's opened wide,

And with solemn slow stride

Now the Envoy stalks in, and sits down at his side :—

“ You are welcome, my lord !—I would fain learn from
you



JUUBEI'S MADNESS.

What His Highness may need from the house of
Yagiu ! ”

Right quickly, with a gallant air,

The Envoy's mission 's told :

“ His Highness sendeth greeting fair

To you, his vassal bold !

Late yesternight, in Yedo's town

Arrived from Kiushiu's strand

A fencer—one of wide renown

Throughout that distant land ;

He bore Us letters from the lord

Of Kumamoto's* clan,

And boasts himself the surest sword

E'er known in all Japan ;

If this be so, We 'd fain decide,

And thus We seek to know

If none be here to tame the pride

Of haughty Unshirô ;

And therefore it is Our command

And Our decided will

That bold Yagiu should try his hand

With him to test his skill ! ”

“ Ah ! my lord,” cries the Fencer, in accents of woe,

“ Had I but had this chance twenty summers ago

I 'd have seized it with pleasure, and never said ‘ no ’ !

But alas ! I 'm now agèd—my locks they are white

And my legs they are shaky, and dim is my sight ;

I can scarce walk abroad—much less stand up to
fight !

I would venture to beg, then, this boon at your
hands,—

Let my boy, in my stead, undertake the commands

* Kumamoto, the seat of the Hosokawa family, was the chief castle town of the province of Higo, in the Island of Kiushiu.

Of His Highness !—he's skilful of fence, is my son,
And a right pretty blade—"; quoth the Envoy, "'Tis
done !

For the youth may well claim to appear thus for
you,

In that he also comes of the tribe of Yagiu."

Time and place are arranged,

Bows and smiles interchanged,

And the Envoy takes leave, stalking off as before,
While the household attend him as far as the door—
All except Master Jiubei, who carelessly sprawls
On the mats, staring up at the flies on the walls !
In this strange occupation he's presently found
When his kinsfolk re-enter and gather around.

"Look at *him* !" groans the Fencer, with sorrowful
wail ;

"Oh ! to think that my son his old daddy should fail
At a time when I most his assistance require !

Oh ! unfortunate youth !—thrice unfortunate sire !"

Here the wretched old man

Down his cheeks thin and wan

Pours a deluge of tears—hides his face with his fan—

And (as handkerchiefs then were unknown in Japan)

With his long hanging sleeve dries his eyes and his
nose ;

While the rest, in like fashion, give vent to their woes,

And so weep, wail, and shout,

Sob, and tumble about

In their grief, that they kick up the deuce of a rout !—

"Mataichirô !" here says the Fencer,—“ my lad,

You're promoted to act *vice* Jiubei the mad ;

If my first-born, alas ! cannot come to the front,

You, I know, of this combat can well bear the brunt,

How d'ye feel?"—"Well, I think I'm a match for most men,

And I'll bet I make fully nine hits out of ten!"

"Good!" his father replies;

"Guard against all surprise,

Keep your sword-point well up in a line with your eyes,

Don't be rash, watch each trick Mister Unshirô tries,

Just remember, my precepts, hit hard, and wire in,

And I'll lay fifty *yen* * to a *tempo* † you win!"—

Mataichirô bows at his old father's side,—

Says adieu to O Misa (his lovely young bride),—

Turns to Jiubei, and begs that he'll kindly excuse

Him for having thus coolly stepped into his shoes,—

Takes his leave of the rest,—and then, turning his back,

Picks the *shortest* ‡ of fencing-sticks out of the rack,

(That's the sign of true swordsmanship, ev'ry one knows)

Calls his servant, and forth to the tournament goes.

'Tis a glorious sight, on the morrow's bright morn,

To behold the gay crowd on the Castle's wide lawn;

There the lists they are pitched, and pavilions are spread,

And the sawdust is strewn for the fencers to tread,

* 1 *yen* = rather less than a Mexican dollar.

† Nearly equal to 1 cent.

‡ Alluding to the Japanese fencing proverb, "A quick return is better than a long parry."

And my Lord the Shôgun in his dignity sits,
While the gentlemen, soldiers, and poets and wits
Of his court throng about him, in holiday clothes,
And the gay *hatamoto* are squatting in rows
Betting freely, and wagering jewels and gold
On the relative skill of the combatants bold ;
All restraint is abandoned—they 're out on the spree,
And appear just as jolly as jolly can be !

Beneath, apart from all the rest,
The gaze of each beholder,
Stands forth a man, in silken vest
Looped up behind each shoulder,
And trousers hitched above the knee
As fencers' statutes show ;
By mien and dress, we well may see
'Tis Higo's noted swordsman, he,
The haughty Unshirô !
His massive biceps are displayed,
And bared each brawny limb ;
He needs must be a skilful blade
Who dares encounter *him* !
Nor waits he long—his sturdy foe
Now marches into view !
The heralds loud their conches blow,
Announcing—" Mataichirô,
The son of old Yagiu ! "

Bowing low 'fore the throne, in an accent that 's meek
Mataichirô here craves permission to speak :—
" Be it known to your Highness, my father so dear,
By his age and infirmity, cannot appear ;
And although my big brother should come in his
stead,
He, alas ! is prevented—(he 's wrong in the head)—





THE FENCING BOUT.

Thus on *me* it devolves, as the last of the name,
 To uphold your renown and our family fame !
 But alas ! I 'm incompetent quite for the task—
 Let our friend here 'walk over,' that's all that I
 ask,

For I 'm simply convinced I could make no pretence
 Of a match 'gainst a foe with his cunning of fence !"
 (Here a panic takes place 'midst the gay betting-men,
 And our hero goes backward to fifty to ten !)
 "Not at all !" roars his rival, with gross disrespect ;
 "You 'd defraud me of victory ?—little I reck'd
 That amongst all the swordsmen throughout Yedo
 town
 There should only be cravens !" "Shut up, and sit
 down !"

 Cries the herald :—"Yagiu,

 Such a course will not do,

And His Highness commands you at once to set to !"
 Mataichirô blushes with joy at this pledge
 Of regard,—and the 'bookmakers' hasten to 'hedge.'

Foot to foot and hand to hand,
 Now the practised swordsmen stand ;
 Cautious foes, with courage leal,
 Eyes of fire, and wrists of steel !
 Soon in quick succession fly
 Blow, and thrust, and feint so sly,
 Parry, counter—now they close,
 Part again, and backward goes
 Either champion full a yard,
 Standing warily on guard—
 Turn, and at it once again,
 Ply their single-sticks amain,
 Put forth all their skill—in vain !

Nought avails it, not a whit—
Neither one can make a hit !

Round the second !—as before,
Long they strive, though wearied sore ;
Then—though fickle, sometimes true—
Fortune seems to aid Yagiu ;
Fall his blows like wint'ry rain,
Backward now, and yet again,
He his foeman, pace by pace,
Drives across the listed space
'Gainst the palings 'neath the throne—
Now, proud boaster ! hold thine own !
Strive as best thou may'st—but no,
Nought can check the final blow !
Ha ! what 's that ?—th' uplifted brand
Flies from out the victor's hand—
Falls before him on the sand !

“ Disarmed ! disarmed ! ”—the combat's done,
The winner's lost—the loser's won !

Mataichirô bows, and retires from the ground ;
Mr. Unshirô stares with surprise all around,

For he cannot make out

How a foeman so stout

Should have chucked up his chances of winning the
bout ;

And my lord the Shôgun, too, seems mightily vexed
At the issue, and looks not a little perplexed—

“ Ha ! I've got it ! ” at length he cries :—what is 't he's
got ?

—Your indulgence, kind Reader ! this scene ' sayeth not ' !

On the spacious verandah, in view of his gate,
Sits the Fencer, whose mind's in a sad troubled state,
 As he waits the return
 Of his son, ere he learn
All the ups and the downs of the combat so stern.
There he comes! — "Mataichirô! how went the
 fight?"
Not a word in response—in a terrible fright
(Though he tries to conceal it) he cries, "Oh, my
 son!
I'm on tenter-hooks, waiting the news that you've
 won—
For you *have* won, I bet—you would never be
 tricked!
Answer!" — "Well, if I must, I'm—disgracefully
 licked!"
 With a stupefied air,
 And incredulous stare,
Here the Fencer sinks down on the matting—and
 there
He reclines, looking truly more dead than alive,
And as white as I'm painfully conscious that I've
Look'd, whene'er I 'fell flat' while attempting a dive!
 "Now, father dear," the youth does cry,
 "From this you well may see
How all incompetent am I
 Your heir-at-law to be!
In Jiubei's name your will must run,
 I'll yield to him with joy;
Though I'm the son of 'Number One,'
 He's still your elder boy!
As for *me*—thus disgraced, I'm unworthy to bear
E'en the name that belongs to my brother and
 père;

So I'll change it—turn *chônin**—and get me to work
 At the *soroban*,† 'stead of the sword and the dirk!"
 —Up he springs, with an air of decision and gloom,
 And, as stiff as a drill-sergeant, stalks from the room.

Once again the door opens, and Mister Yagiu
 Sees the face of his first-born appear to his view;
 Master Jiubei bears in two enormous round hats
 Such as farmers wear—these he lays down on the
 mats

Just in such a position as plainly to show
 That he's marked on this '*Chiu*,' and on t'other one
 '*Kô*' ;

(That is, '*Loyalty*,' '*Filial Piety*'—these
 Are a precept familiar to all Japanese.)

 " Oh, father dear," he murmurs, while

 The Fencer starts in dread,

 " You know how loose is ev'ry tile

 Upon my hare-brained head !

No swordsman I—I scarce can be

 Your apt successor—so

Pray leave th' inheritance from me

 To Mataichirô !

'Tis but his right—you can't but please

 That justice should be done—

Though I 'm your elder boy, yet he's

 The child of '*Number One*' !

As for *me*—I've resolved to turn farmer, my Sire,
 And to toil all day long in the paddy-field mire,
 Rise at dawn, go to bed when the stars twinkle free ;
 And if e'er I'm inclined discontented to be,

* *Chônin*, lit. 'wardsman,' one of the ordinary townspeople, as opposed to the military class or gentry.

† *Soroban*, the abacus, or counting-board, used by Japanese merchants in making arithmetical calculations.

Just a glance at these hats, with their mottoes so true,
Will recall what I owe to my brother and you !”

“ Oh, you reprobate !” roars his old father, in ire ;
“ Turn a coolie ! dig *daikon* ! till ‘ paddy-field mire ’ !
What the deuce do you mean ?—do you fancy that I
Could permit for a moment that e’er you should try
To degrade thus the rank of the true *samurai* ?
Turn a sword into ploughshare ! — Turn farmer !—
But stay.

You shall use that same sword in a different way ;
So, my springal so gay,
You will please to obey,
And commit *hara-kiri sans* any delay !
What ! you won’t ? then I’ll pretty soon make you !”—
and here,

With a snatch he takes down from the wall a long
spear,
Makes a couple of passes (just testing its weight),
Fiercely glares at his son, and then ‘ goes for him
straight ’ !

But although he may boast
That he’s still match for most

Men, he finds that he’s here reckoned *minus* his host ;
Master Jiubei has caught up the hats in a crack,
Whirls them round as a shield ‘gainst the Fencer’s at-
tack,

Makes a dive at the spear-head, and then in a trice
Holds it tightly between them, as though in a vice !
How the father does stare at this marvellous *ruse*
Of his lunatic son !—he consents to a truce—
And in wonder ejaculates — “ *Do-o-o-mo !* ” — (that’s
‘ Zooks ! ’)

“ Why, I’m blessed if the fellow’s so daft he looks ! ”

"Daft! I never *was* daft!" Jiubei says with a sob;
 All my lunacy's nought but a long set-up job,
 In the hope that my father, reduced to despair
 By my illness, would choose for successor my *frère*;
 I'm the elder—but who was my mother?—I swear
 That no son of a *gonsai** should oust the true heir!"

E'er this speech is well o'er

Comes a knock at the door—

Mataichirô enters, and bows to the floor:

"Dearest *pater*," cries he,

"Don't be angry with me

If I frankly confess what you've failed yet to see—

I will make a clean breast, and will candidly tell

That my fencing this morning was nought but a 'sell'—

Done on purpose—in order that Jiubei might win

The inheritance, mansion, and title, and 'tin'!

I'm the child of your first wife—but still I would
 scorn,

E'en in view of that fact, e'er to oust your first-born!"

Here's a kettle of fish!

Though the Fencer may wish

It, he cannot quite swallow this wonderful dish!

But who comes?—that's a face we recall to our mind—

'Tis the Envoy!—he enters—and slowly behind

Files a train of attendants who solemnly bear

Sundry packages, tied up and labelled with care:

"These are cumshaws," says he, "to the son of Yagiu

"From His Highness, who's pleased to approve of the
 true

Skill and free style of hitting you lately displayed—"

"But I lost! I was beaten!"—"Not much, my young
 blade;

* *Gonsai*, concubine, as opposed to the *Honsai*, or true wife. Rather a slang term.



THE RIDDLE SOLVED.

You were winning right easily when you elected
To abandon the game—why, your *ruse* was detected
On the spot, though you strove your intentions to
smother—

All the town knows what's up betwixt you and your
brother !

And His Highness thus graciously marks his esteem,
For he's not quite so verdant as p'raps you may
deem !"—

“Thanks, noble Sir !” in grateful strain
Exclaims the old Yagiu ;

“Perhaps you'll also kindly deign
To say what I should do,—

How I should solve this riddle ‘mixed,’
And end this question vex—

I'm in a sad quandary fixed,
And grievously perplexed !”

“There's but *one* way,” the Envoy replies, “to get out
Of the matter ;—they're equally skilful, no doubt,
With the sword—let them *fence* for the title, and he
Who the victor may prove your successor shall be !”

“Done !” and “done !” cry the others ; both youngsters
with zest

Grab their single-sticks, quickly doff mantle and vest,
And, as neither his toilet unduly prolongs,
In a moment they're at it—aye, ‘hammer and tongs’ !

Now I would that the Muse would inspire me aright
To describe in fit terms this most desperate fight,

That I truly might tell
Each event that befel,

The attacks, and the guards, and the counters as well,
As, in fine mimic warfare, each loving young brother
Most fraternally whacked and belaboured the other !

But alas ! the fair lady, though willing to tell a
Peaceful story, don't love *bella, horrida bella* !
So I'll cut matters short (as my paper's nigh done)
By announcing that *neither* the victory won—
Not a hit was obtained—and each gallant young man
Merely finished precisely as first he began !—
Here the Envoy speaks forth :—"This tough point, I
 opine,
Had as well be now settled by judgment of mine :
I decide, then, for Jiubei—indeed, to my sight,
The succession is his (as the elder) of right ;
So let *him* be the heir—Mataichirô here
Is a swordsman unequalled, with never a peer ;
Let him start, like his dad, as a Master of Fence,
Let him travel through ev'ry wide province, and thence
Let the fame of his feats reach his own native town,
Let him win for himself titles, honour, renown,
Let him prove himself skilful, and gallant, and true,
And exalt to the heavens the name of Yagiu !"
Curtain falls !—I trust, friends, that this may not be
 quite
Such a tough job to *read* as I've found it to *write* !

MORAL.

I.

I would warn ev'ry son who may feel the desire
Just to simulate madness to worry his sire,
 To keep open his eyes
 And beware how he tries
To display too much int'rest in bluebottle flies ;
For in such case, no matter how sober he be,
All his neighbours will swear that he's in for D.T.

II.

Worthy 'bruisers' !—to you I'd commend moderation ;
Pray do not use your 'mawleys' on slight provocation !

 If a fool should deride,

 'Slang' him back on *your* side—

For the tongue's a good weapon when properly plied !

But if e'er you should find that mere words don't retard,
 tard,

And you *must* hit the fellow—*then*, mind, *hit him hard* !



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